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Kerr

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(54) **CONCENTRIC V-GROOVE COUPLING**

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(60) Provisional application No. 61/053,275, filed on May 15, 2008.

(51) **Int. Cl.**

F16D 11/00 (2006.01)
F16D 25/0632 (2006.01)
F16D 25/10 (2006.01)
F16D 25/061 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC **F16D 11/00** (2013.01); **F16D 25/061** (2013.01); **F16D 25/0632** (2013.01); **F16D 25/10** (2013.01); **Y10T 74/1558** (2015.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC F16D 25/064; F16D 25/061; F16D 11/00
See application file for complete search history.

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(57)

ABSTRACT

A coupling comprises a pair of clutch end members, a clutch center member disposed between the clutch end members, and an actuator coupled to one of the end members. Each end member includes concentric V-grooves disposed on a respective face thereof. The center member is axially movable between the end members, and includes a pair of opposing surfaces. One of the opposing surfaces includes concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the V-grooves of one of the end members. Another of the opposing surfaces includes concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the V-grooves of another of the end members. The actuator is configured to simultaneously couple the end members to the center member by urging the V-grooves of both of the end members into engagement with the V-grooves of the center member.

29 Claims, 13 Drawing Sheets

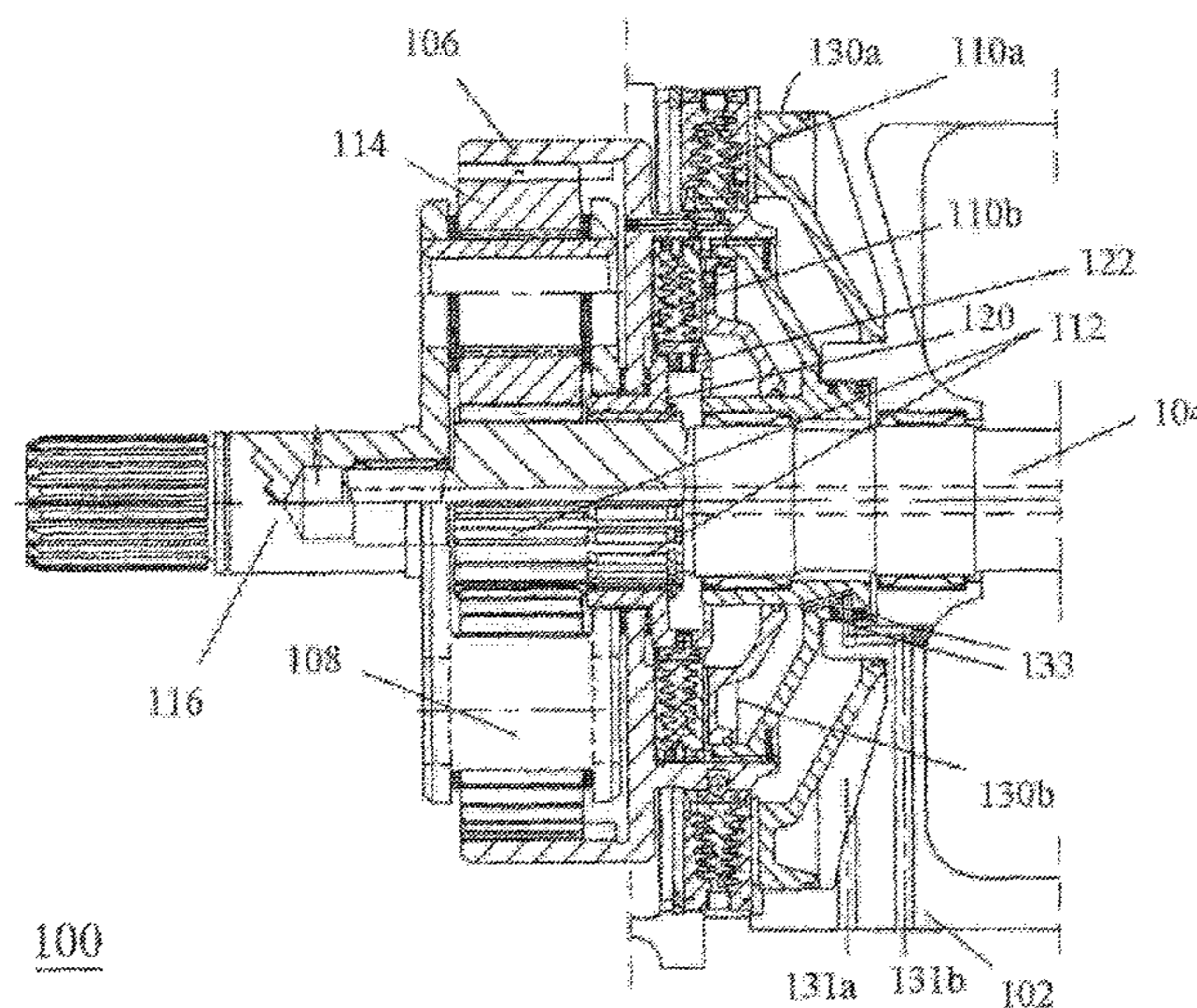
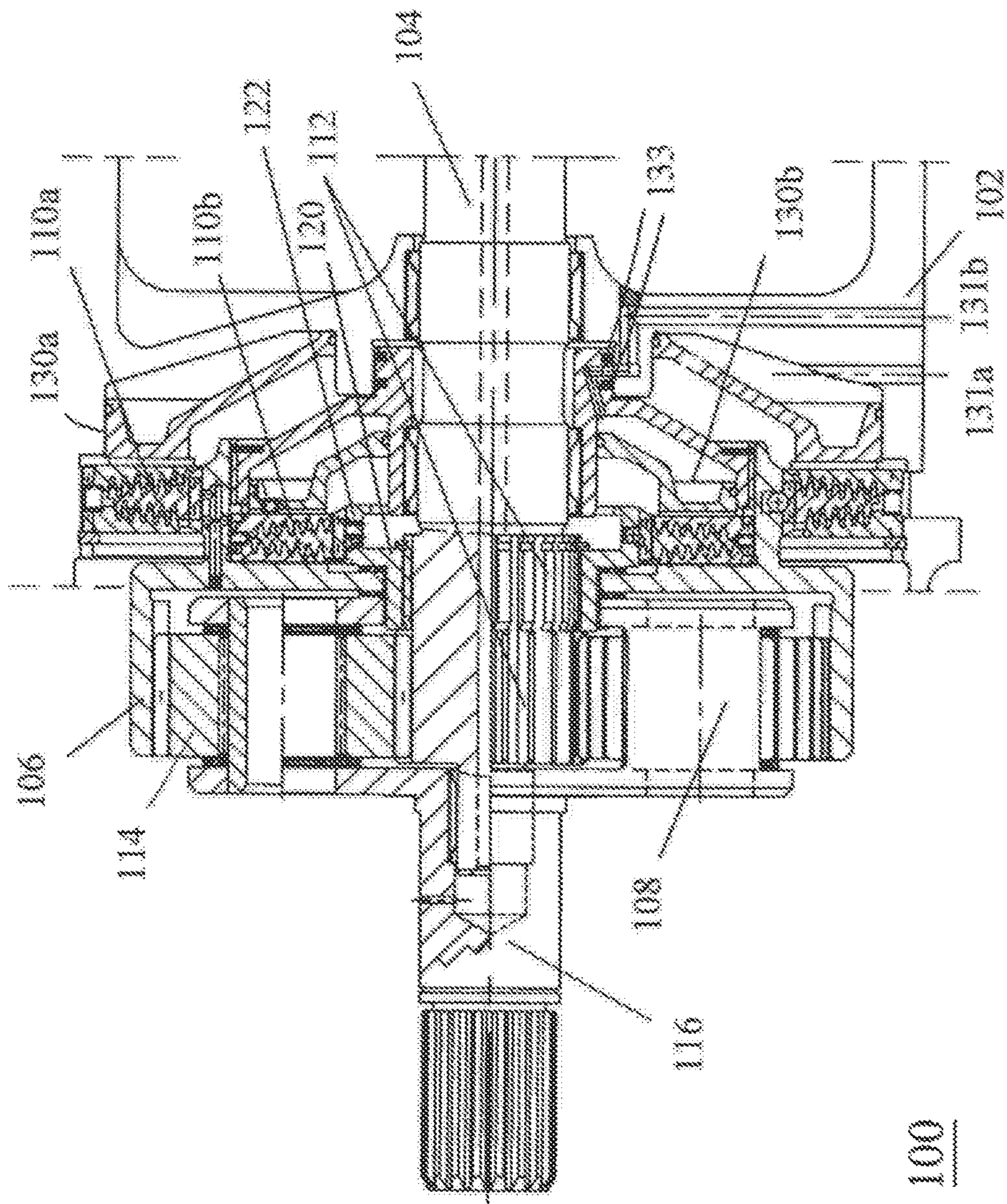


Fig. 1



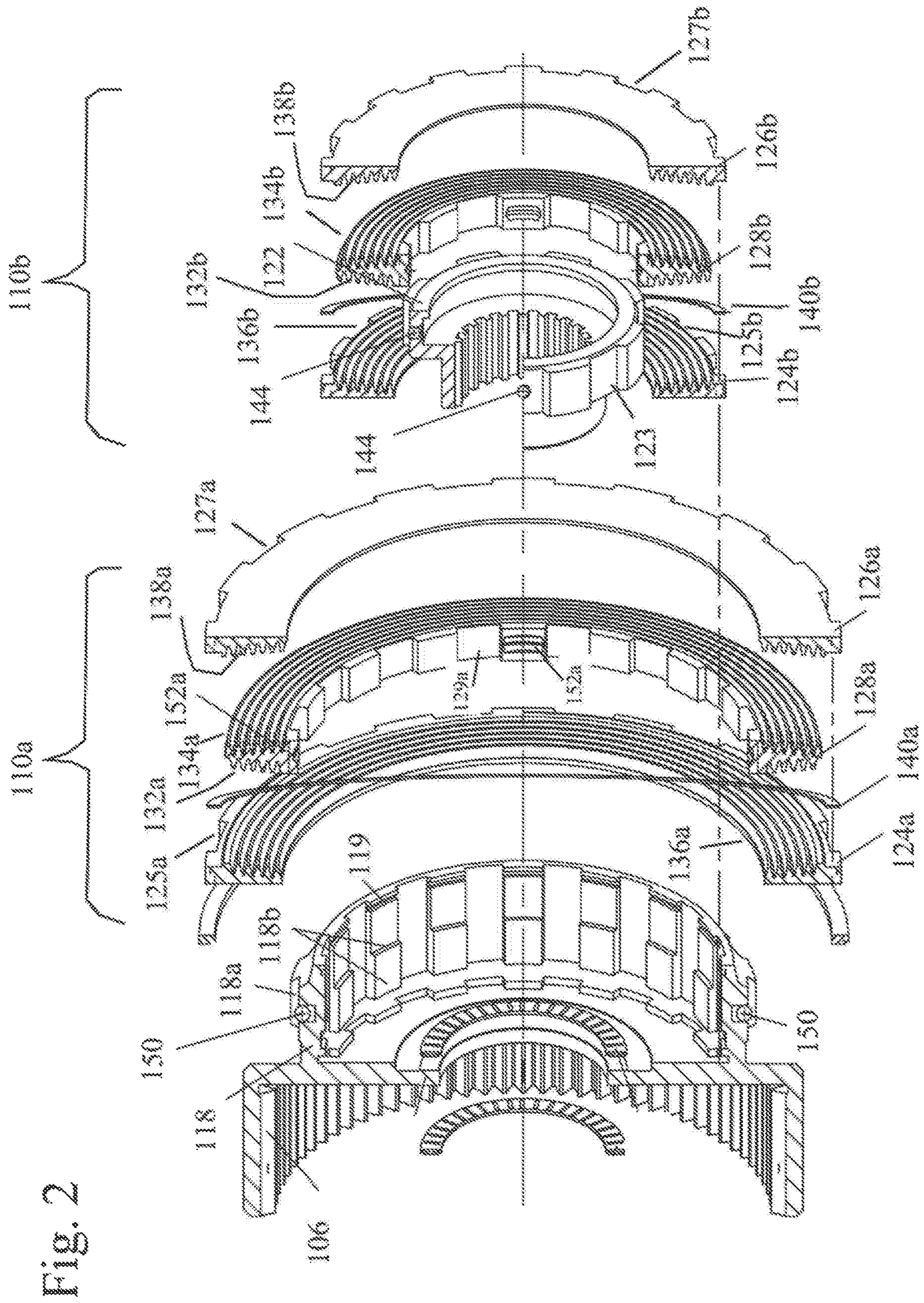


Fig. 2

Fig. 3

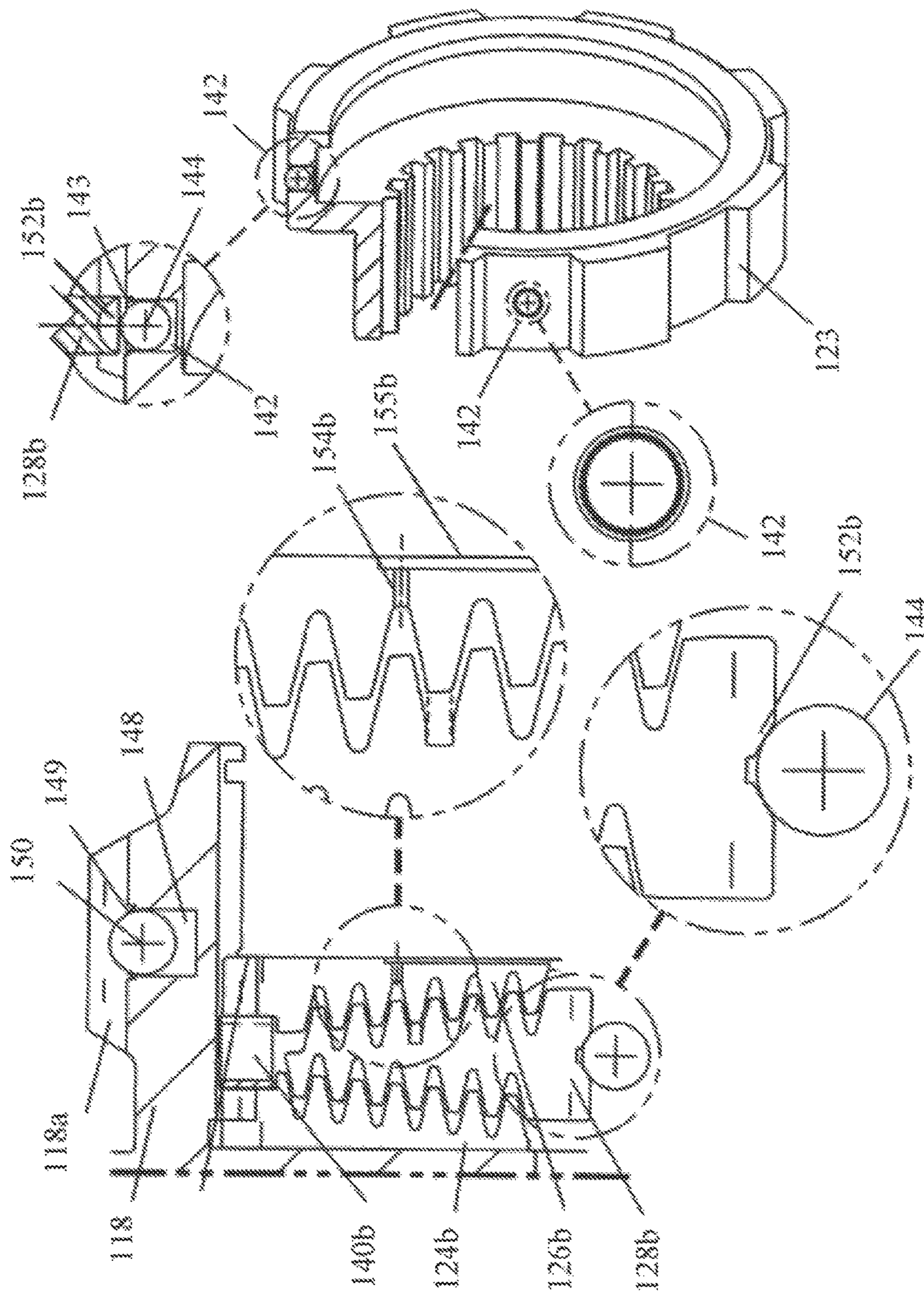


Fig. 4

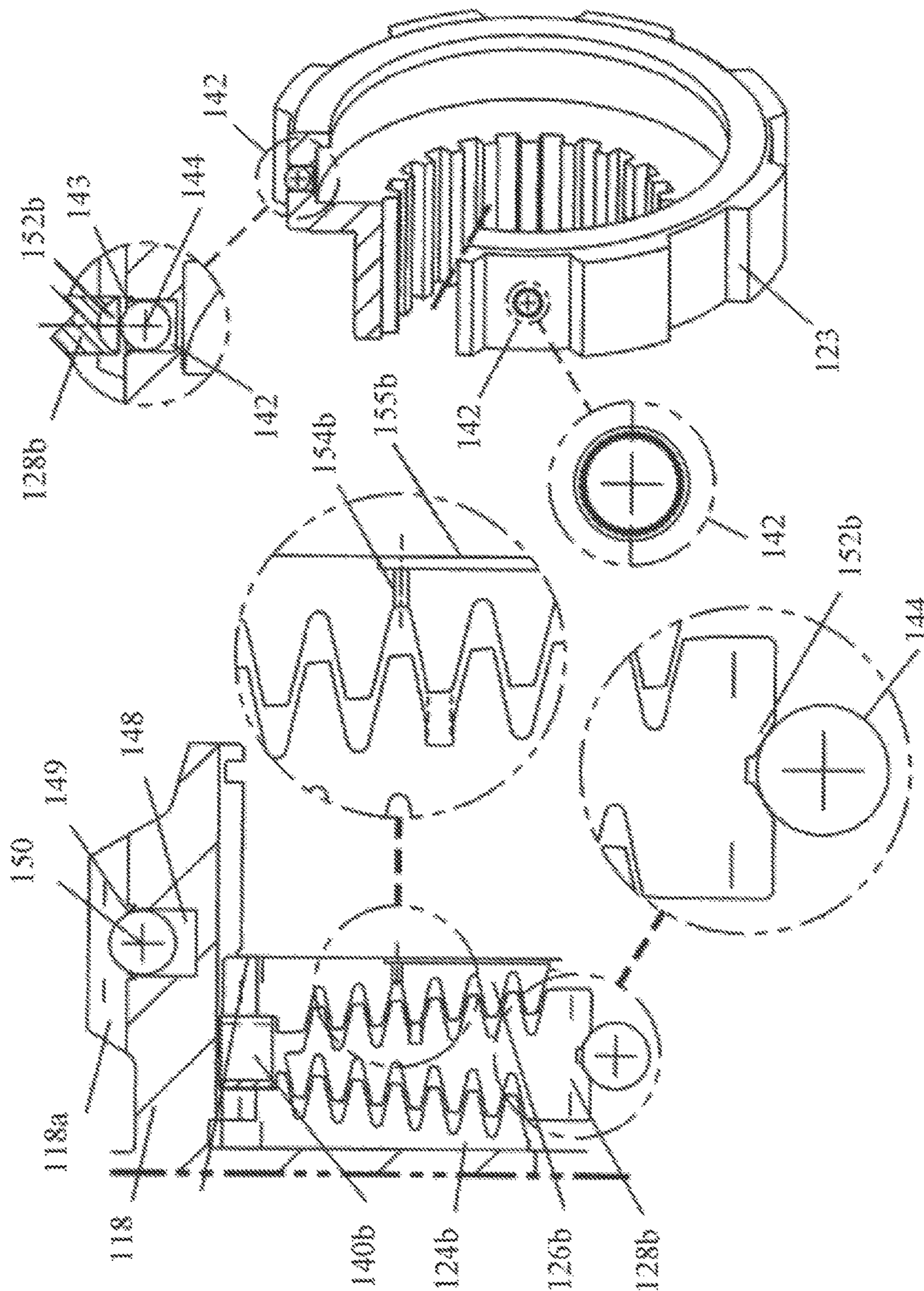


Fig. 5.1

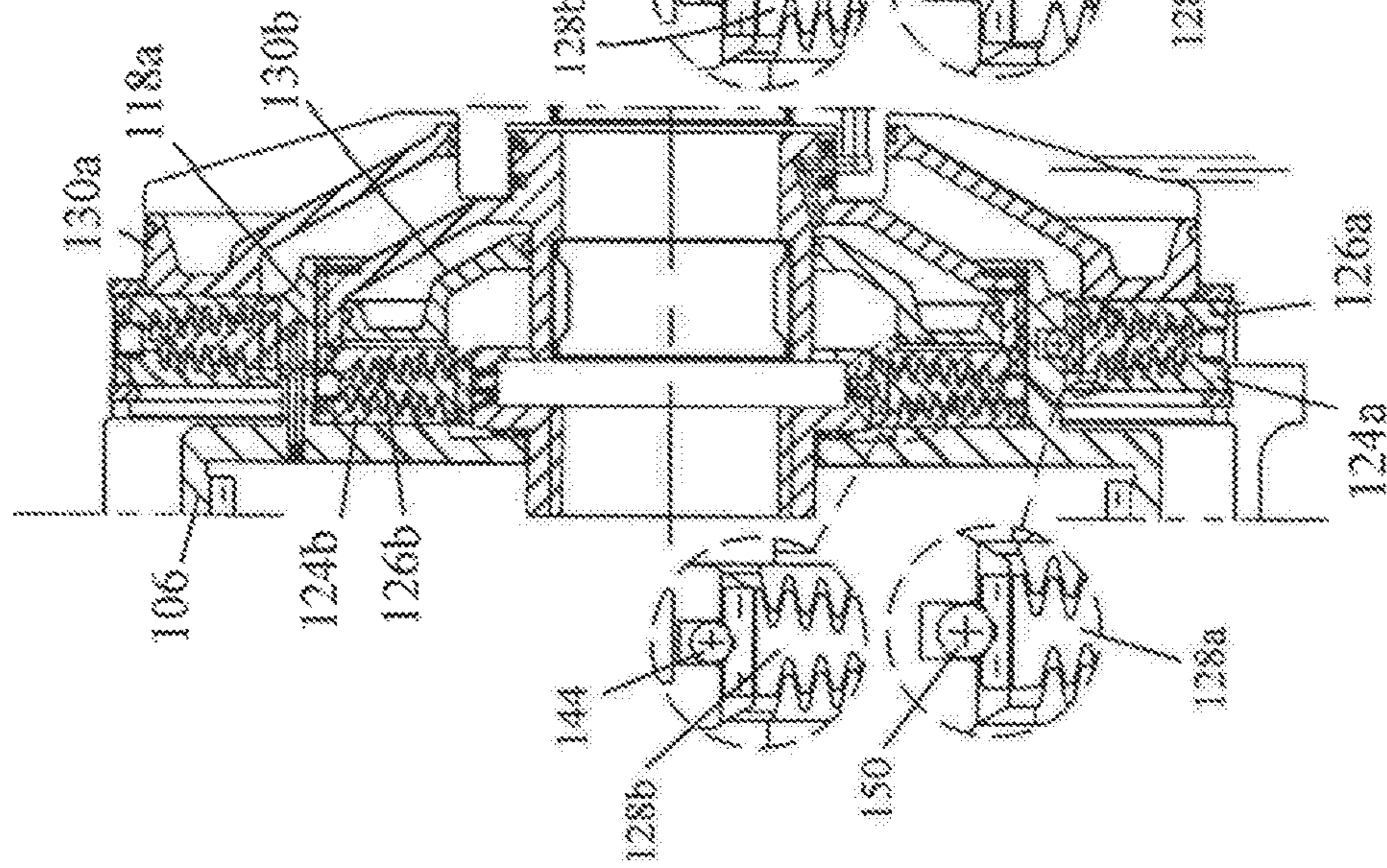


Fig. 5.2

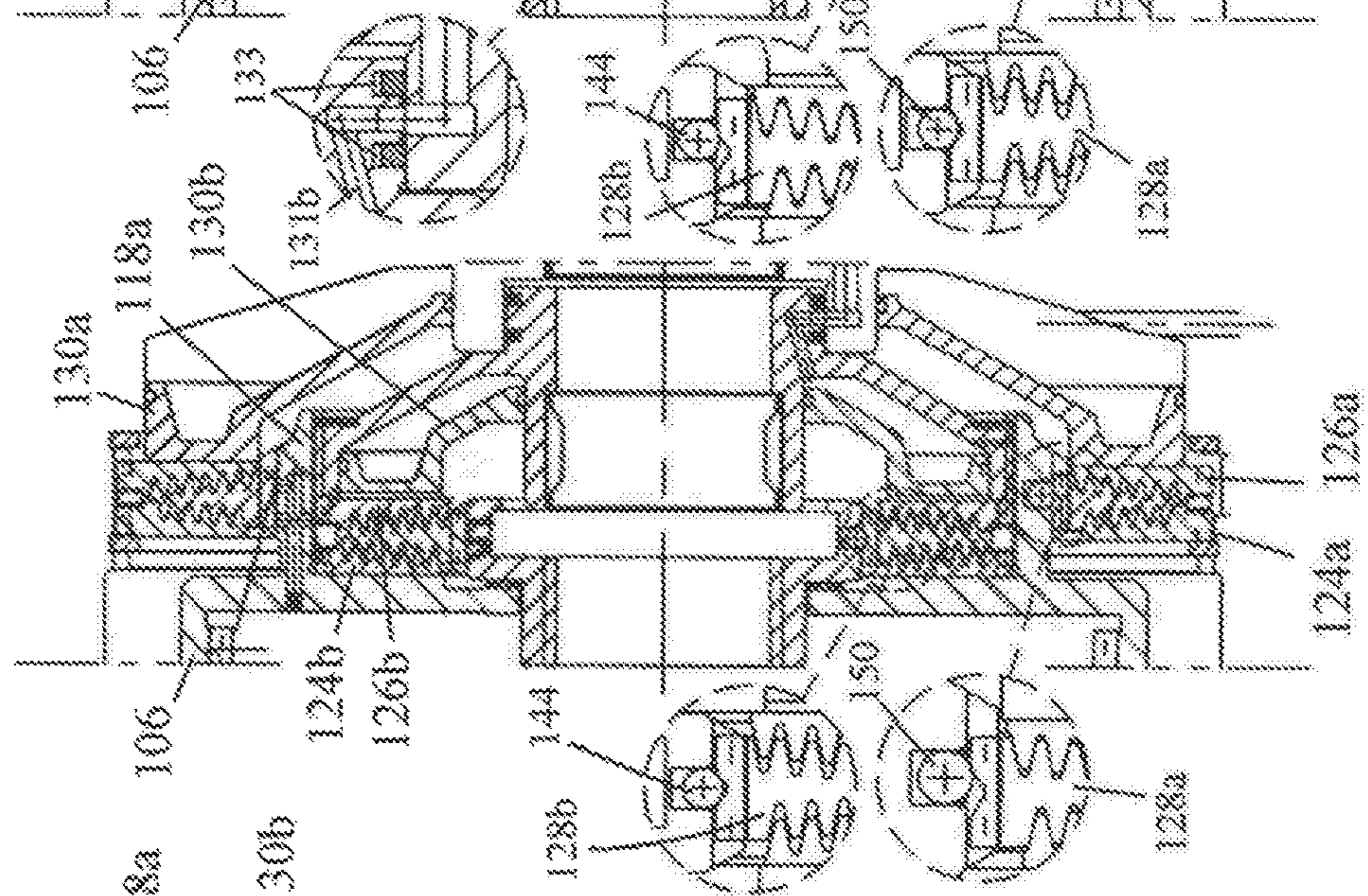


Fig. 5.3

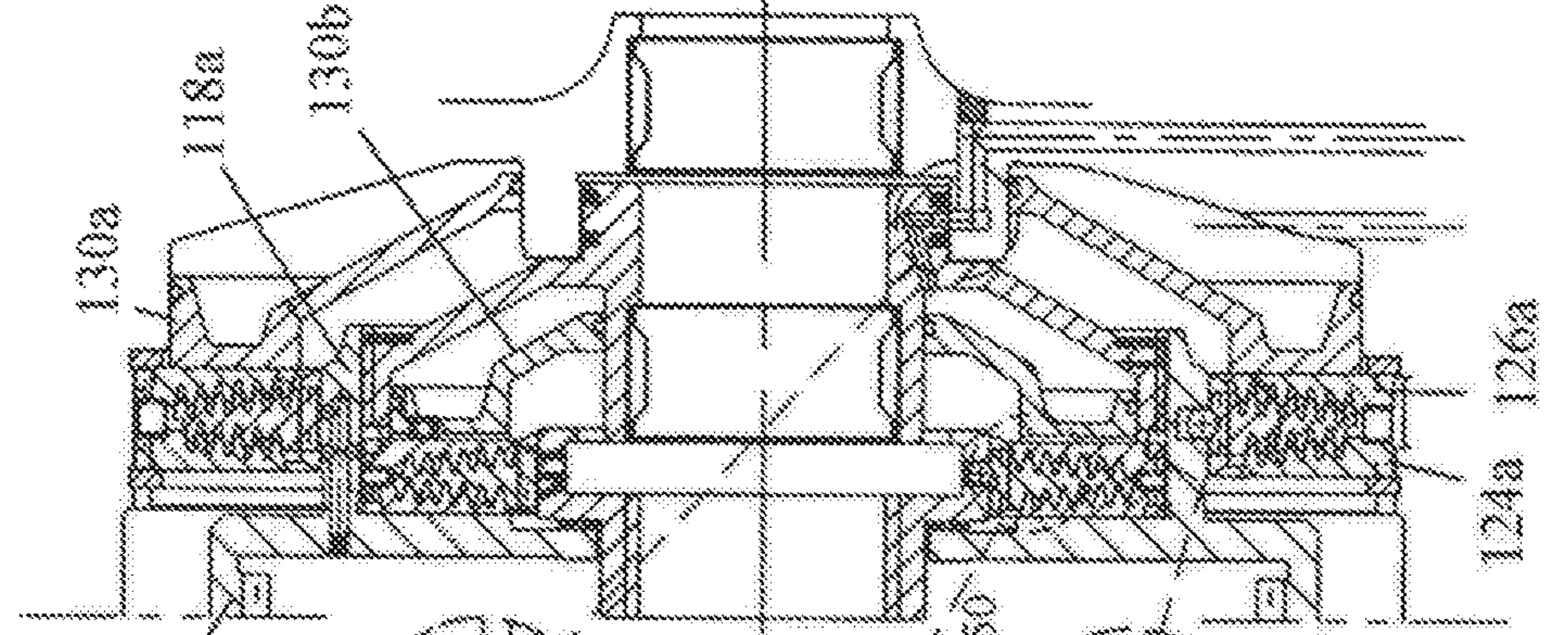
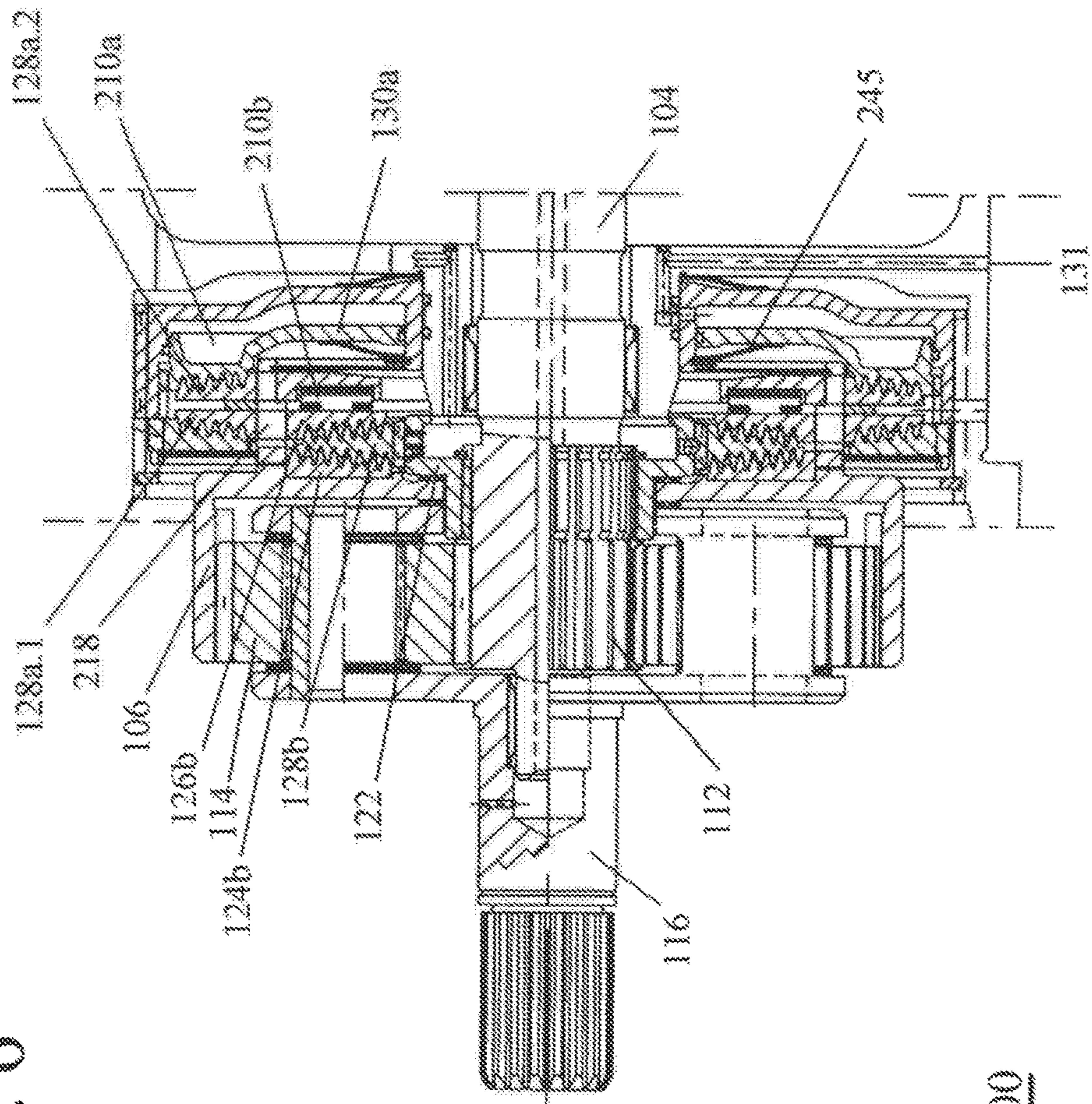


Fig. 6



200

Fig. 7

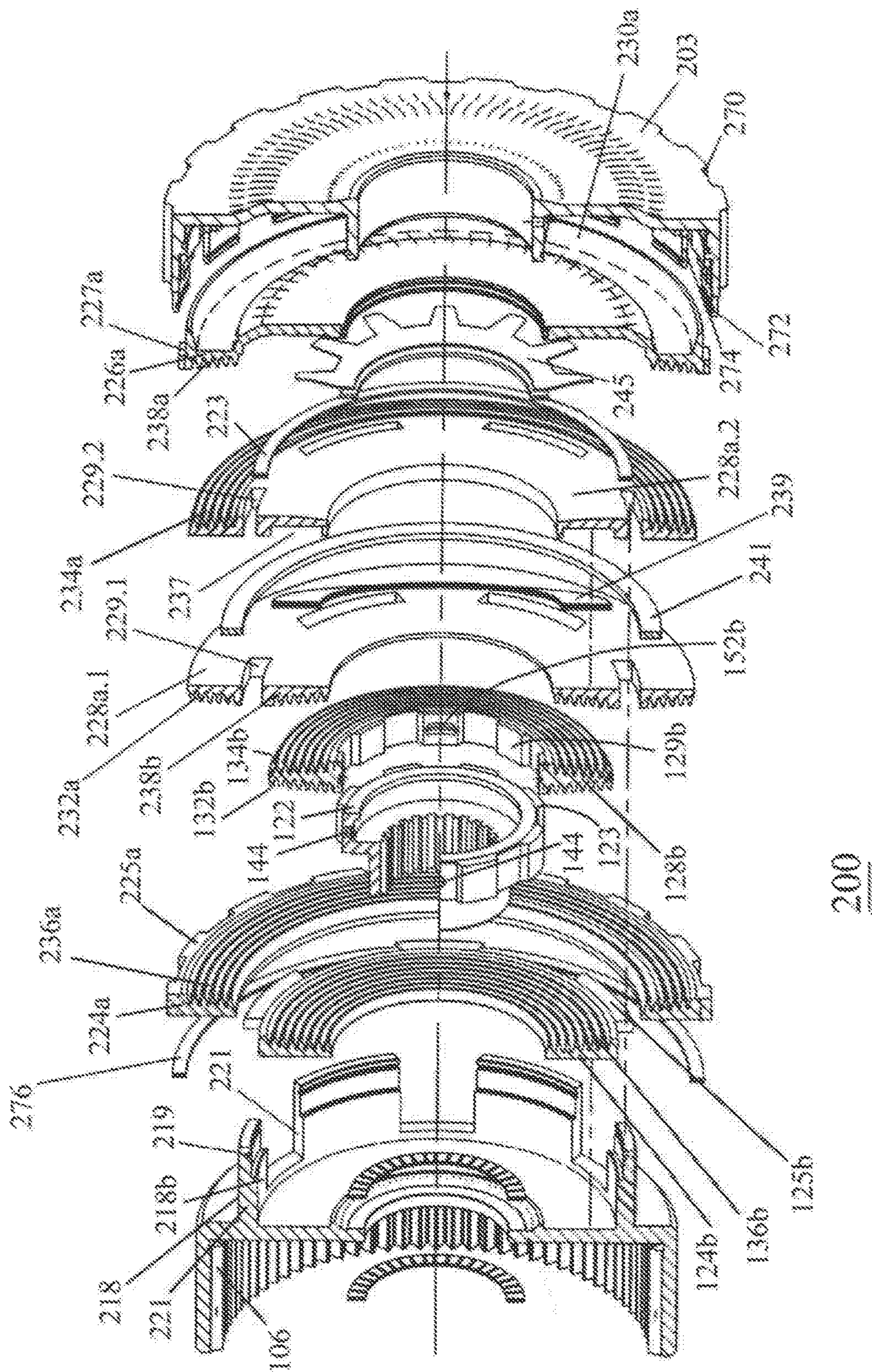


Fig. 8

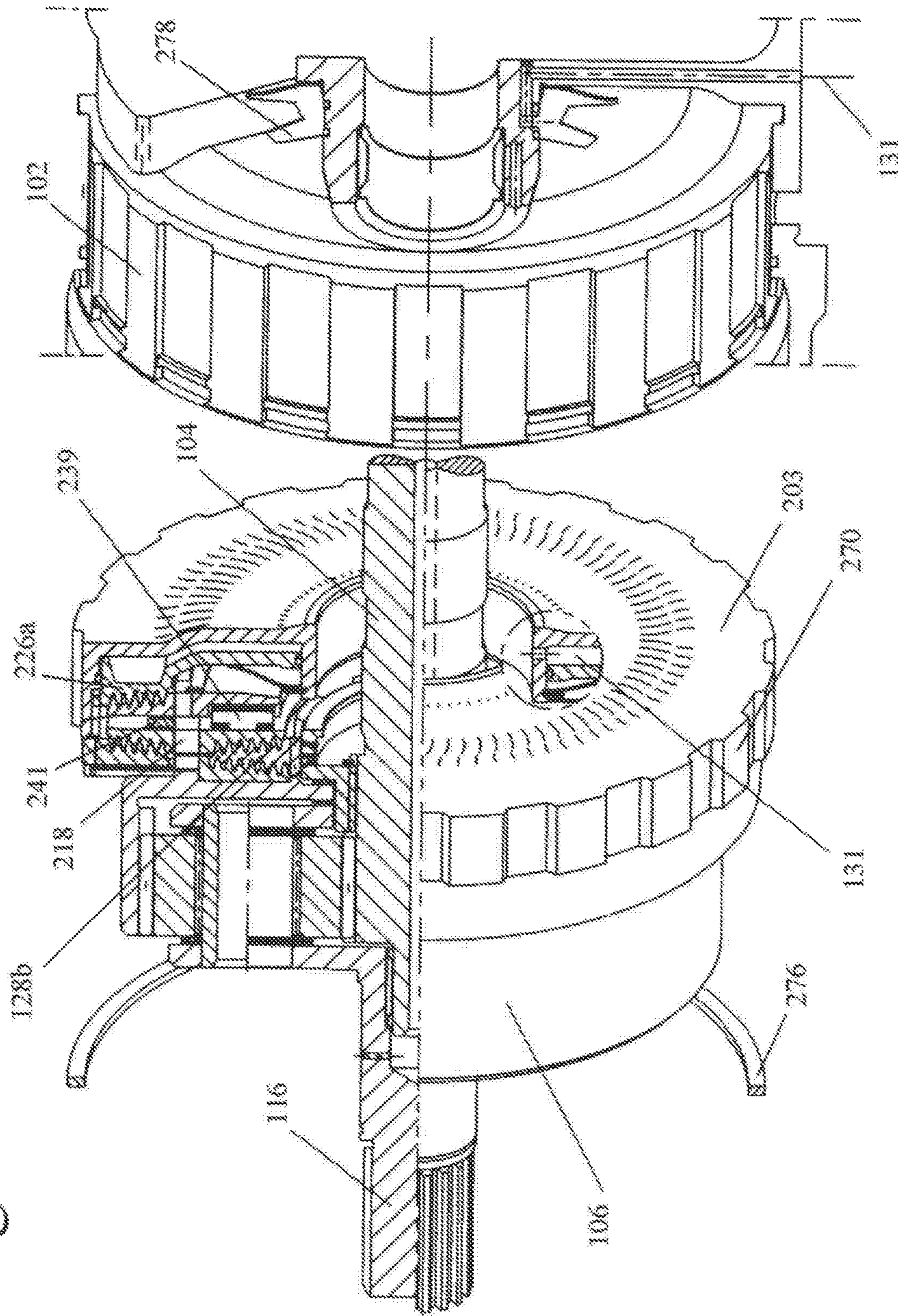


Fig. 9

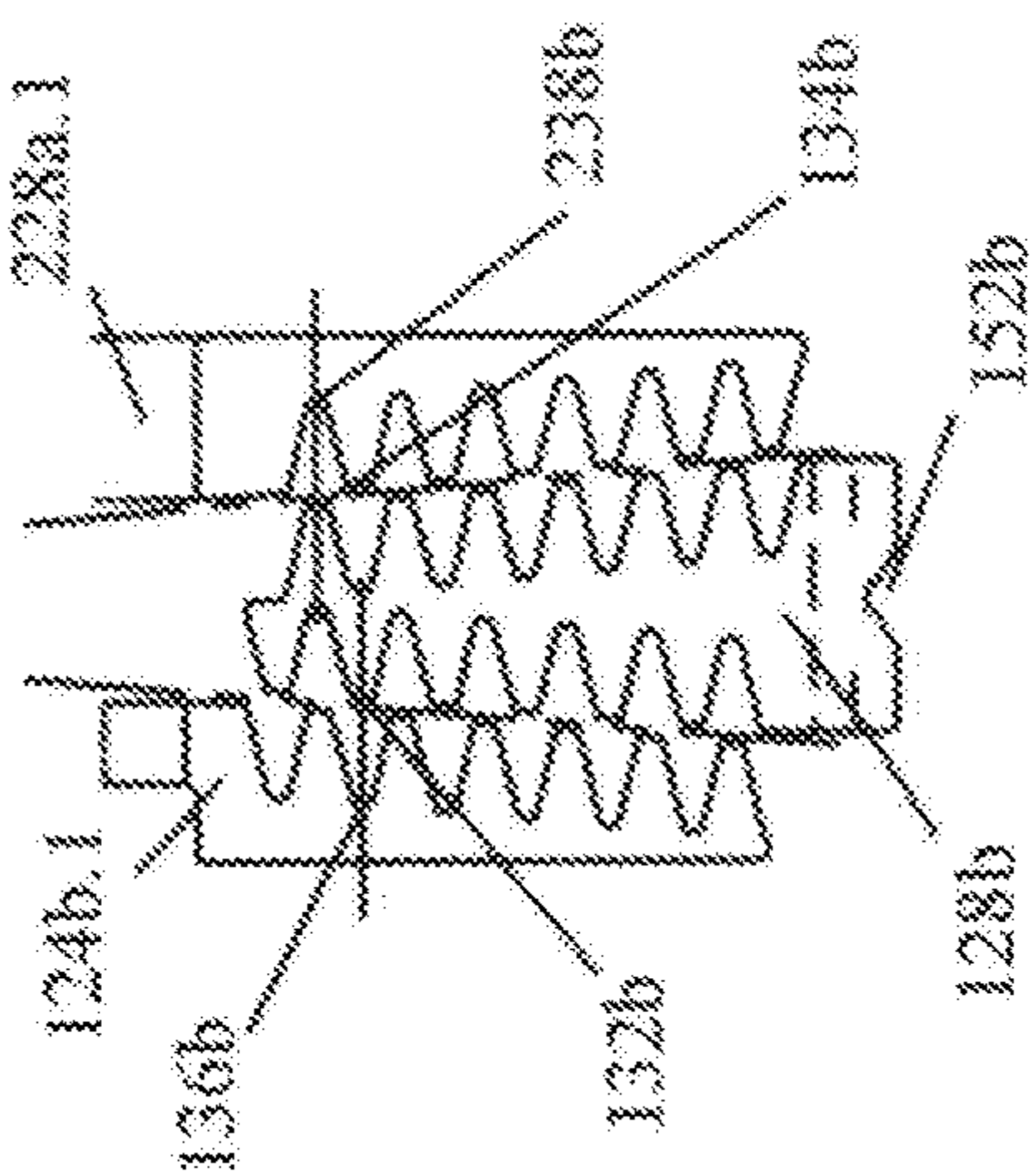


Fig. 12

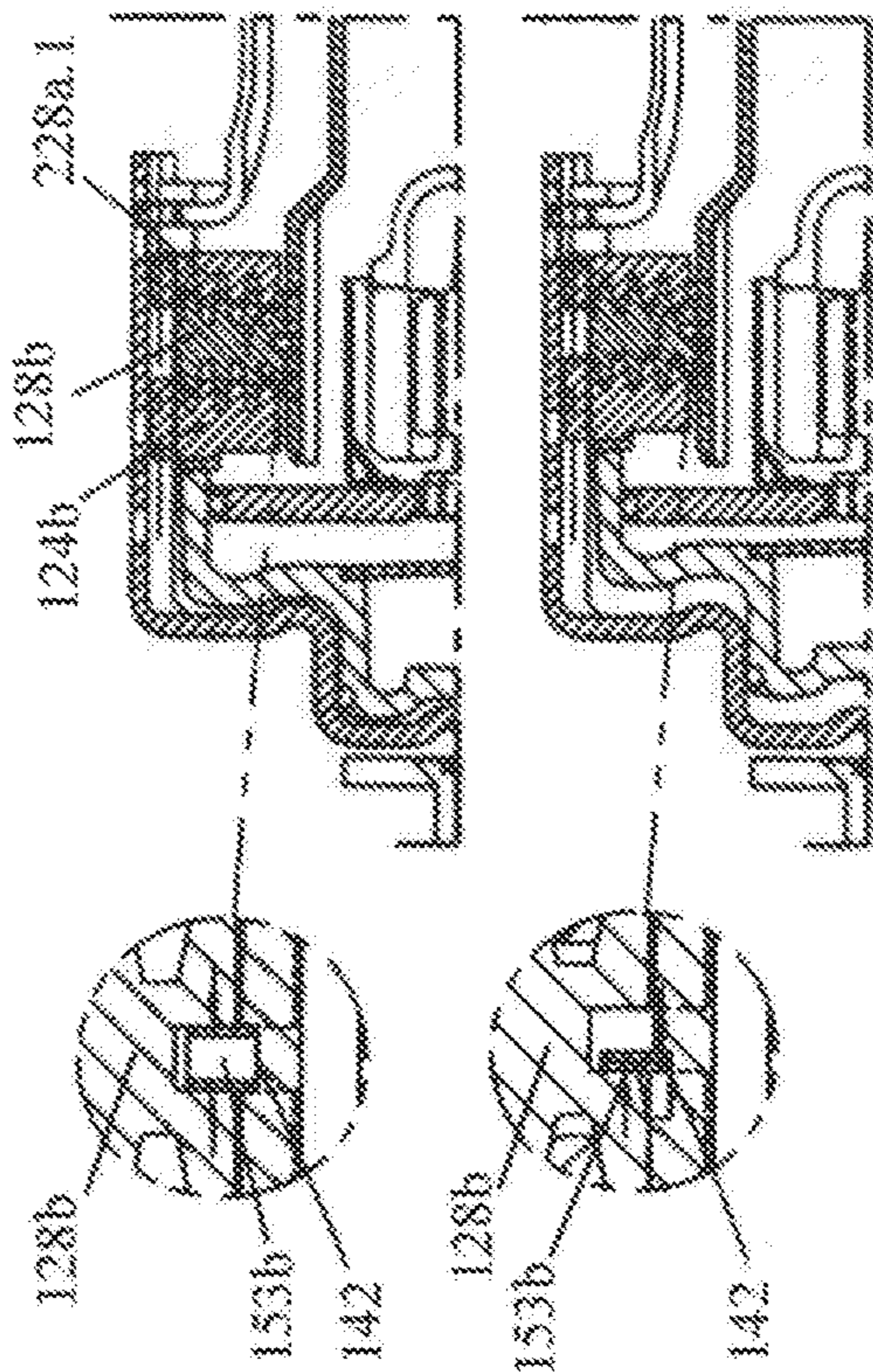


Fig. 10a

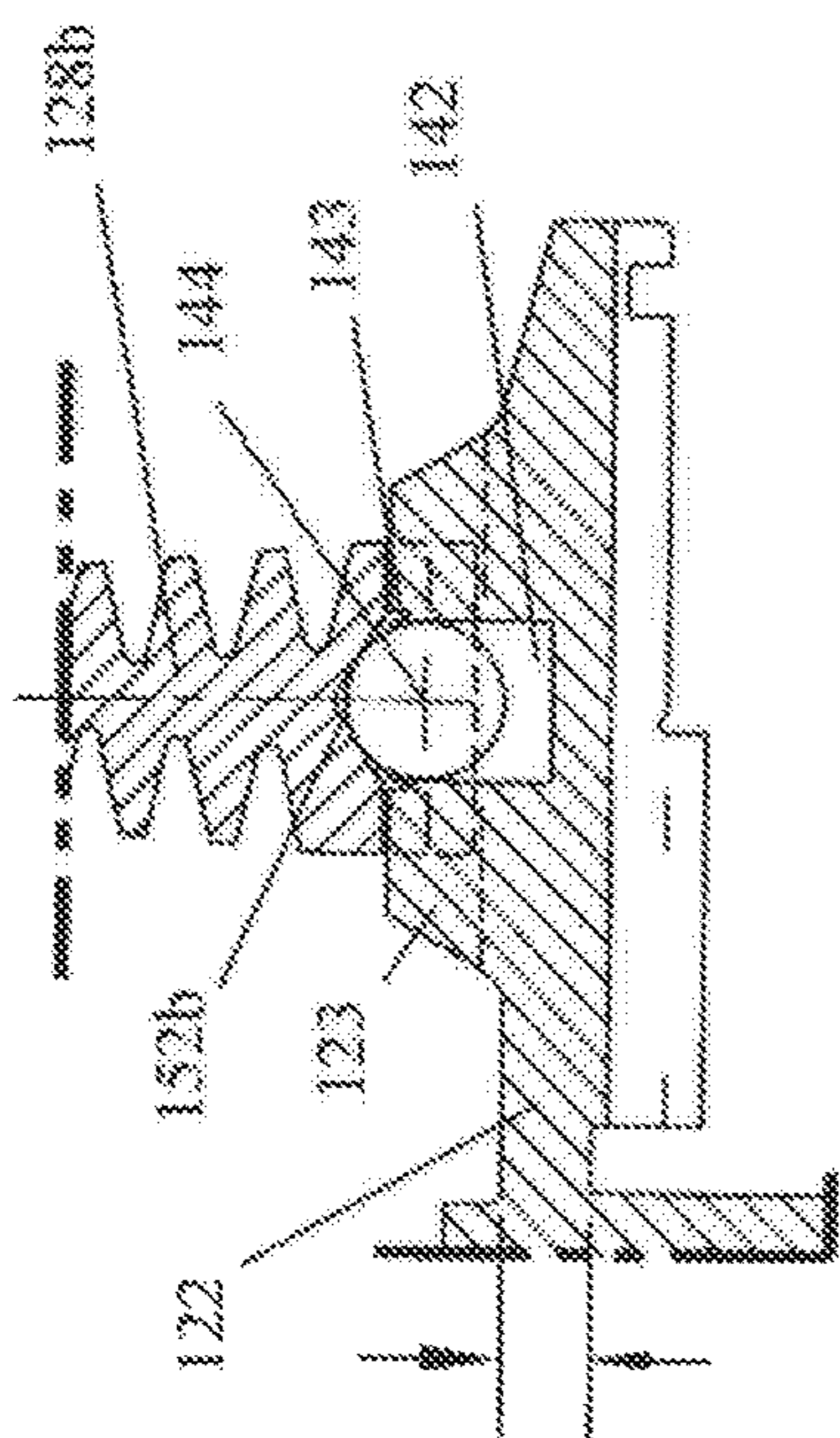


Fig. 10b

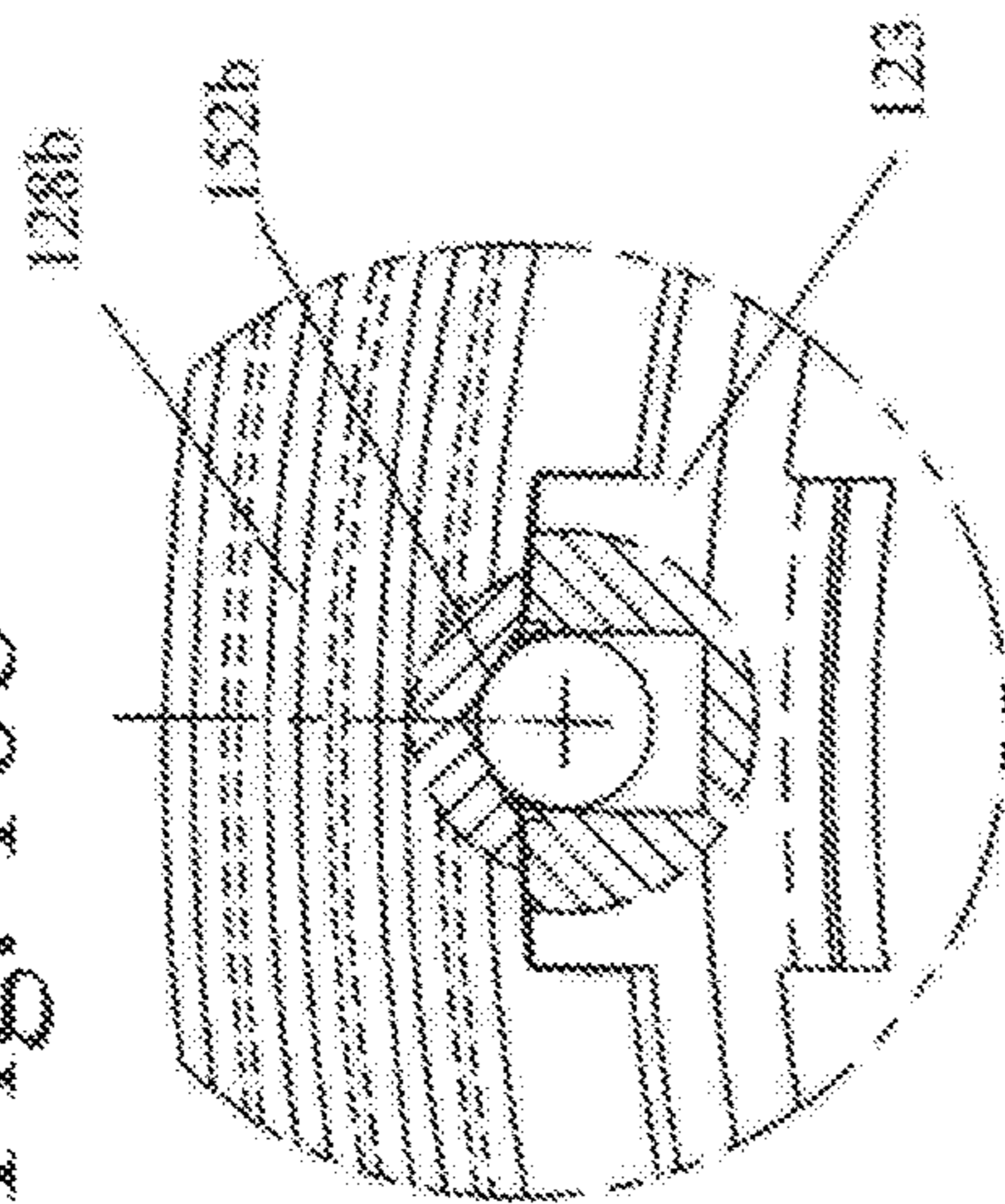


Fig. 11a

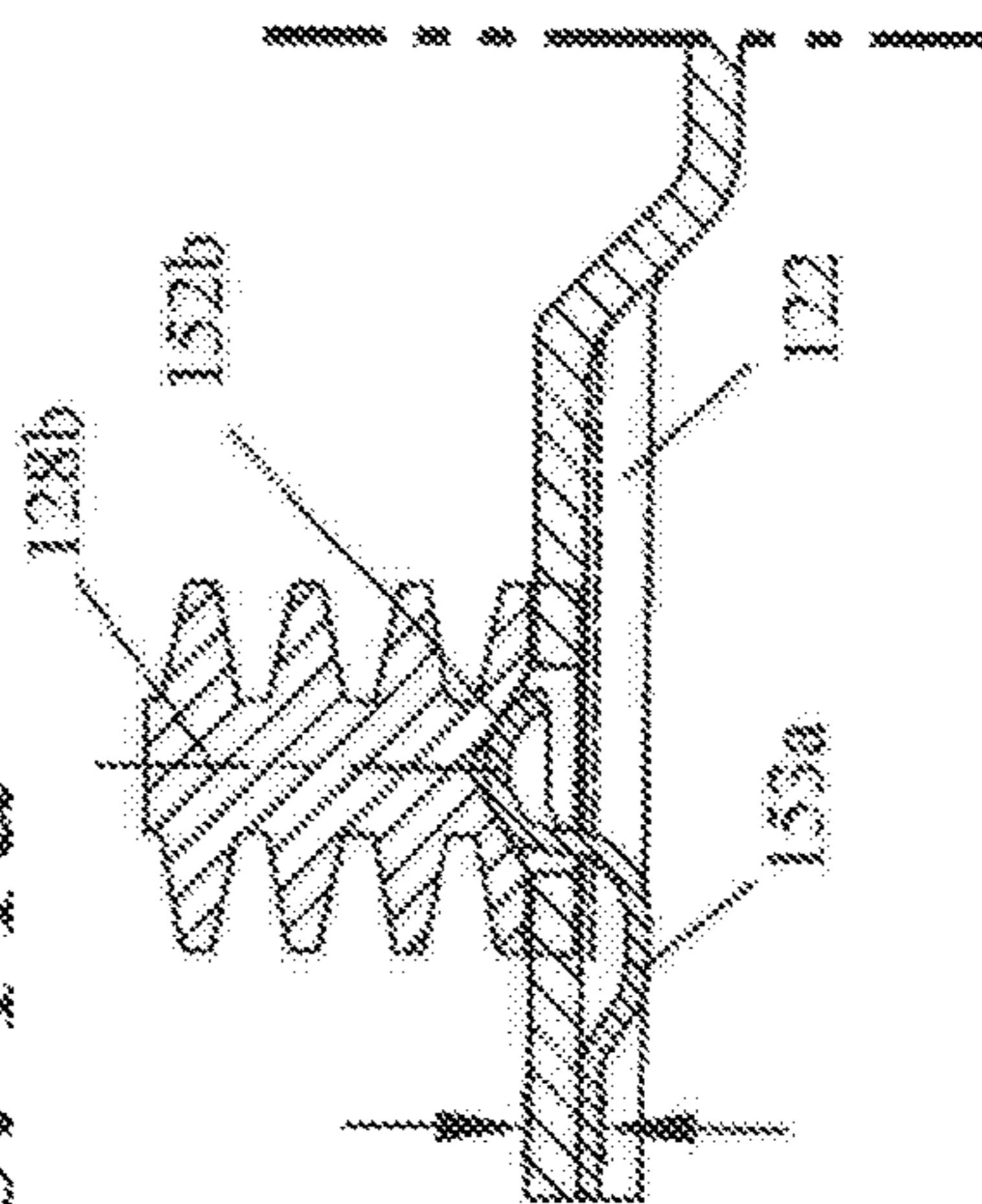


Fig. 11b

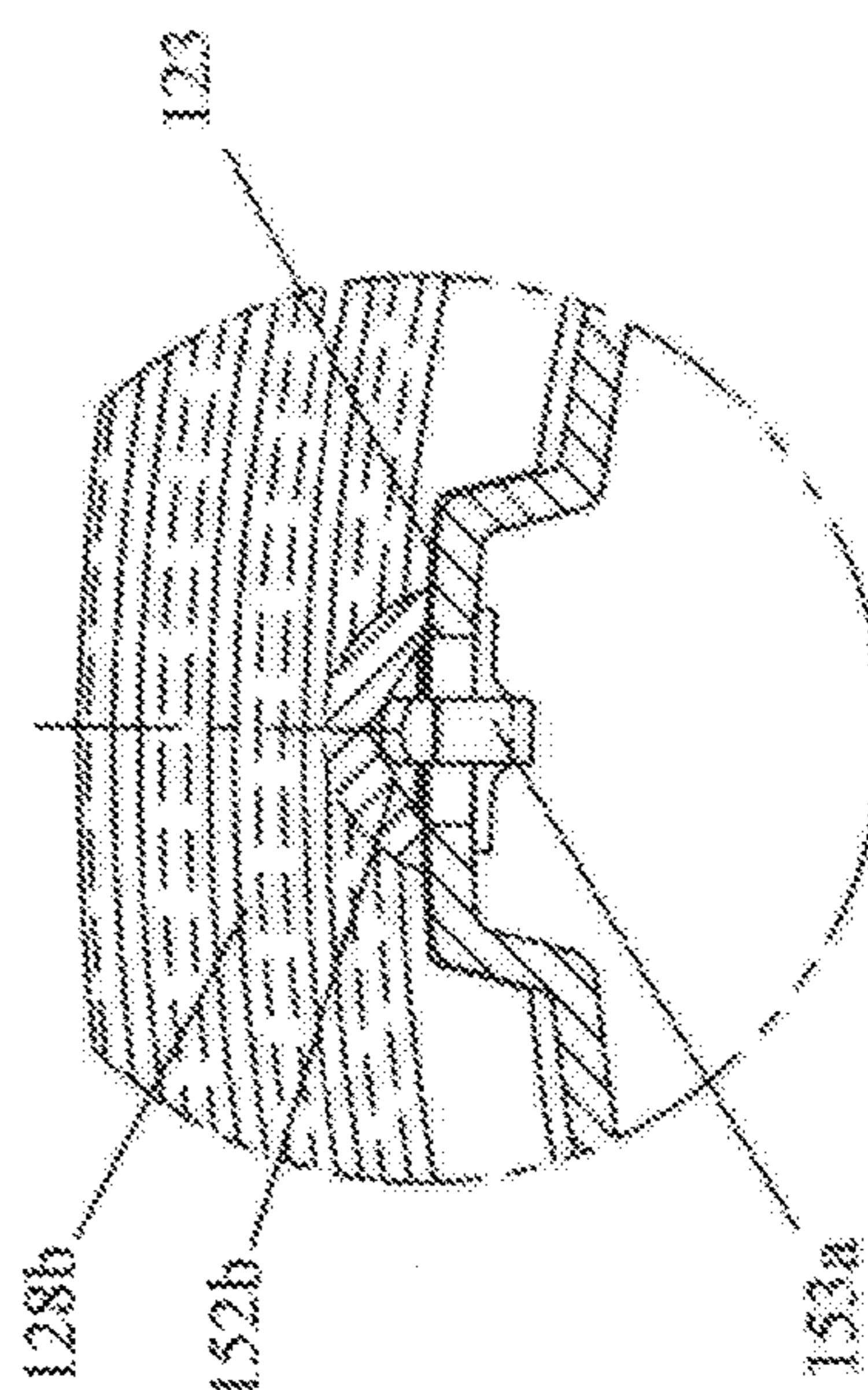


Fig. 14

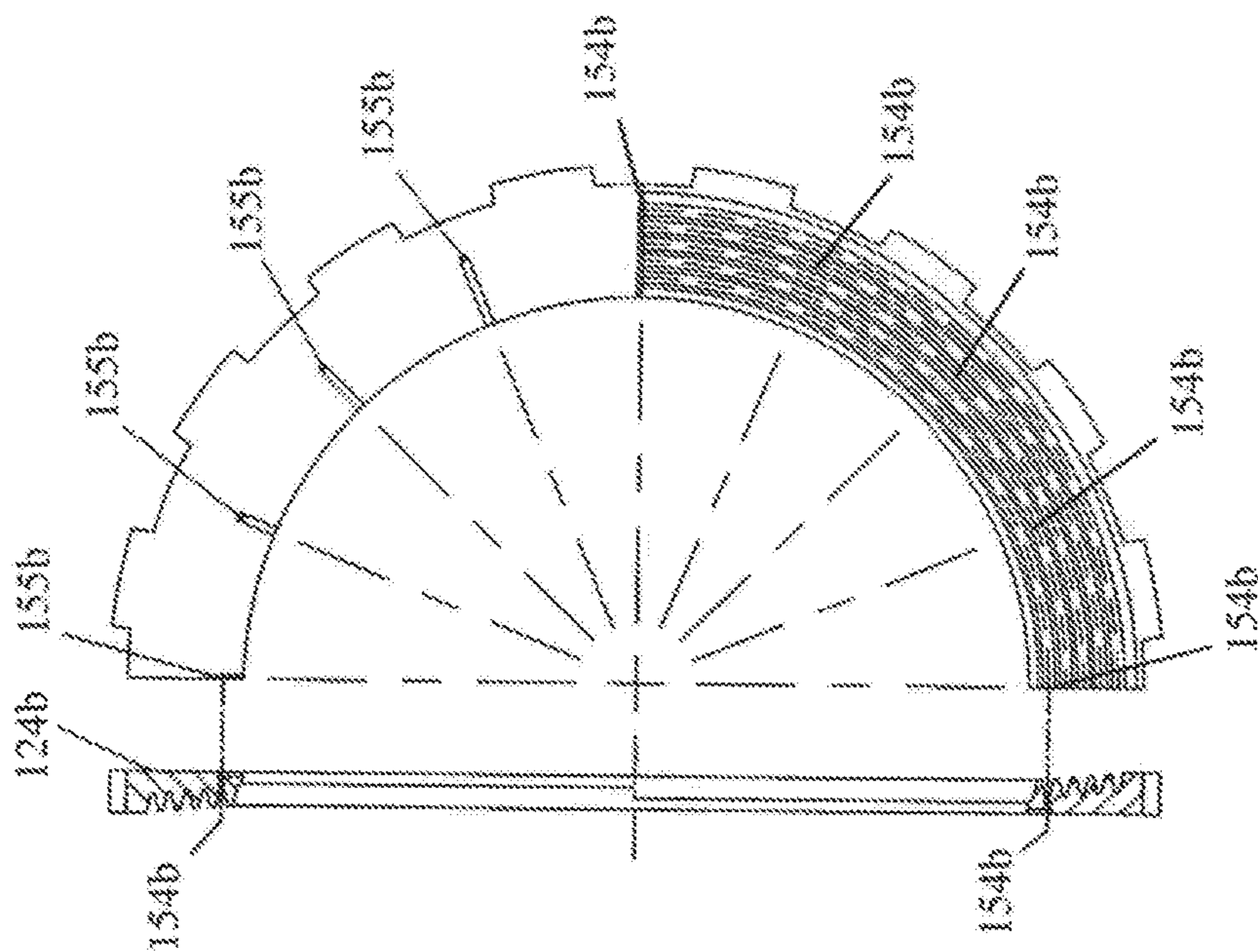


Fig. 13

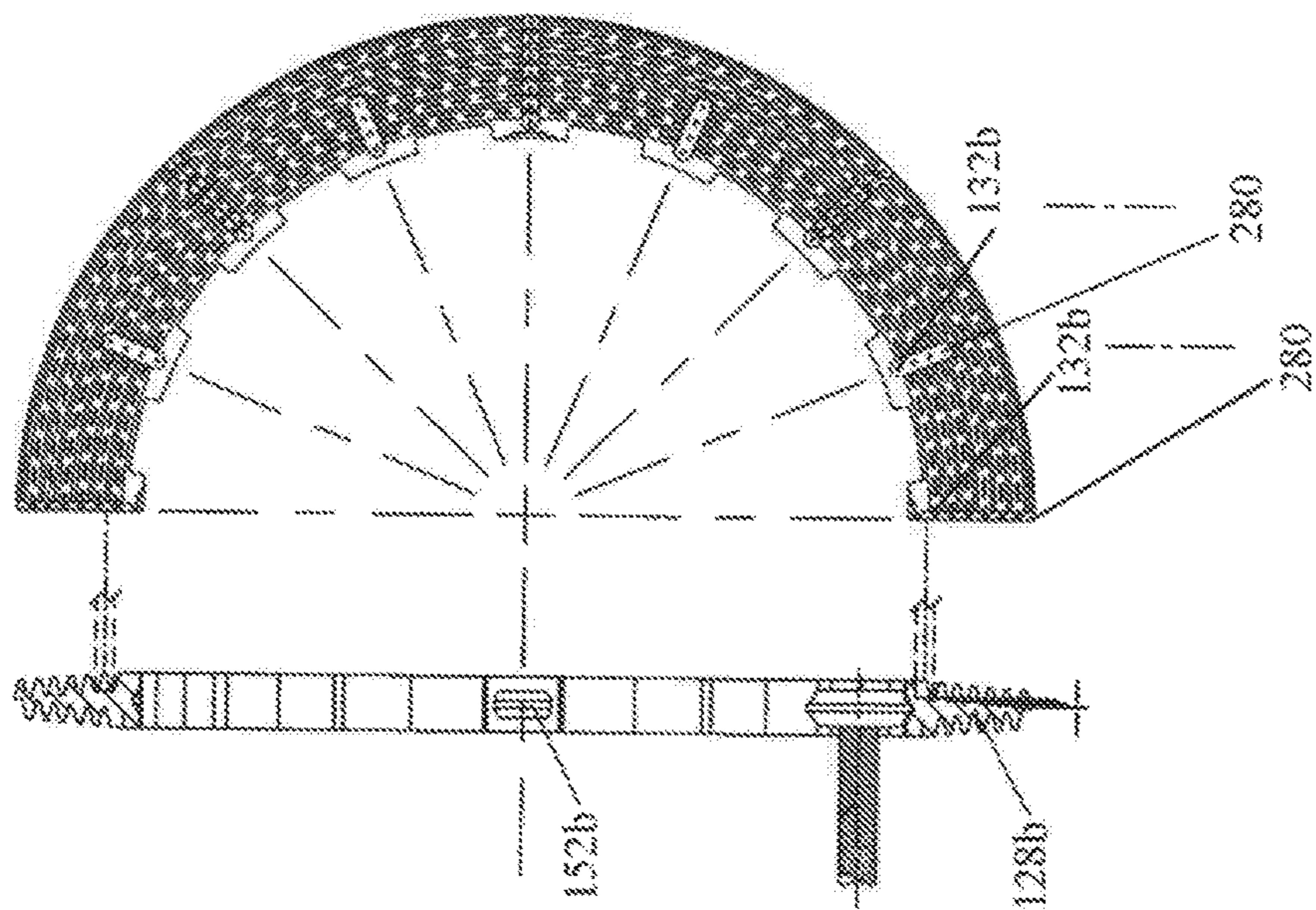


Fig. 15.1

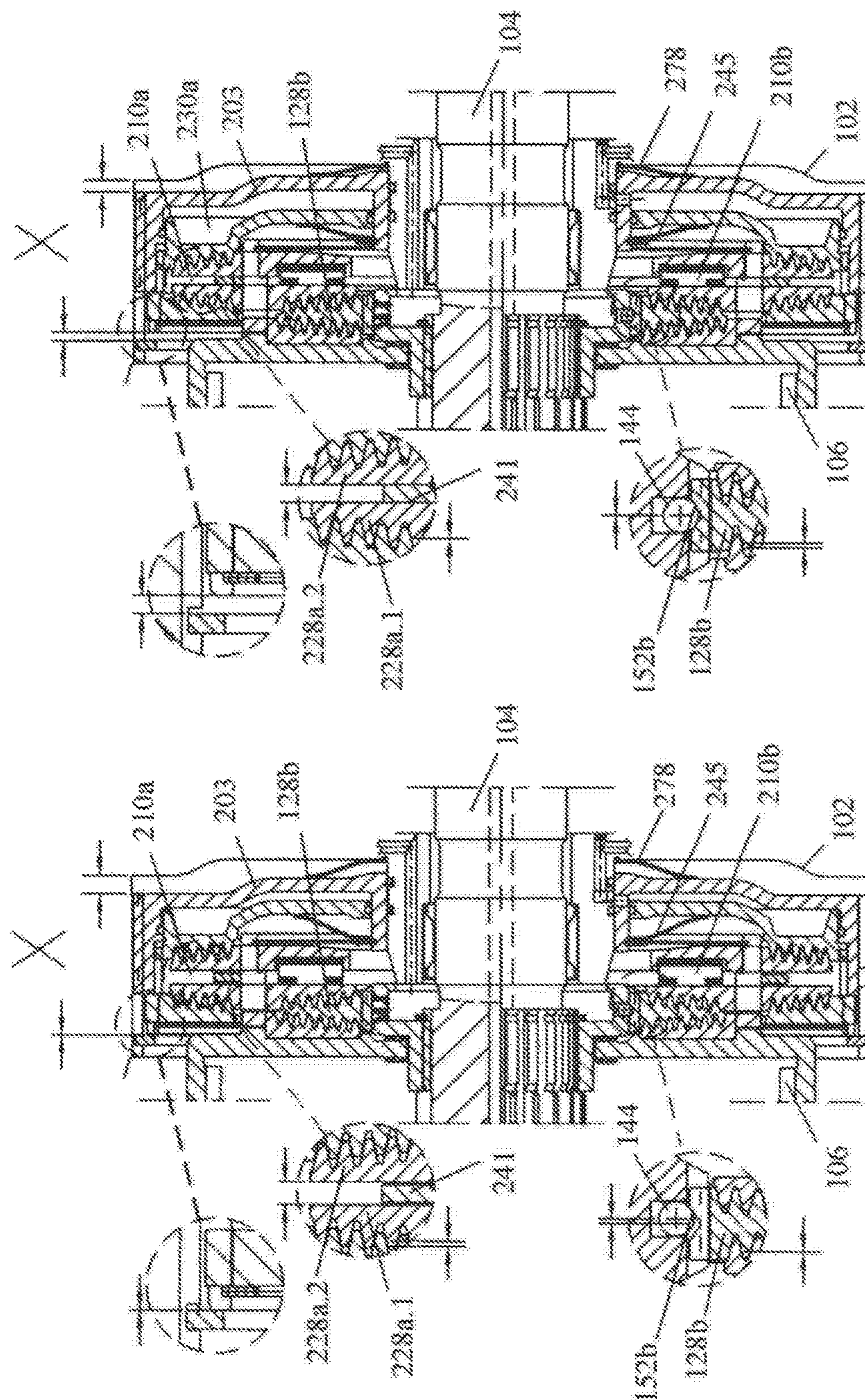
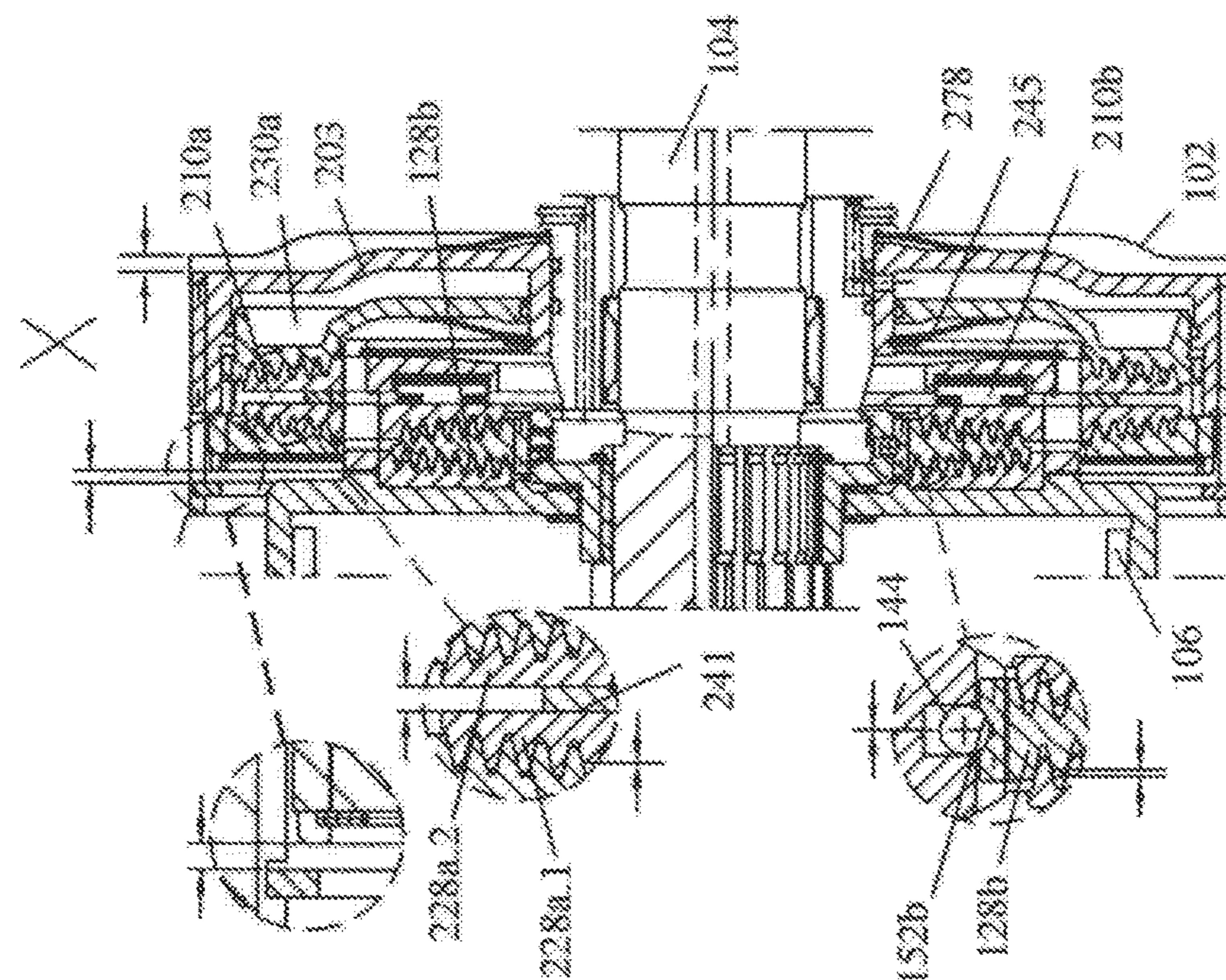


Fig. 15.2



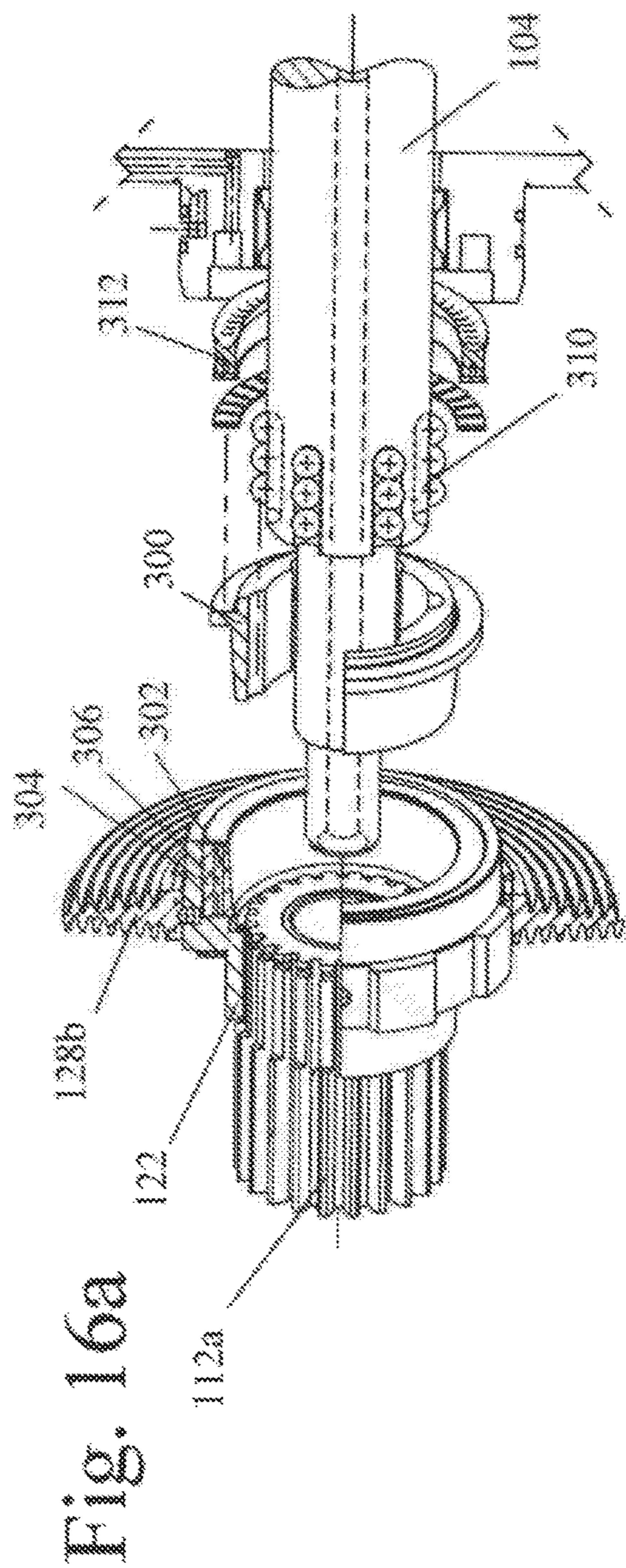


Fig. 16b

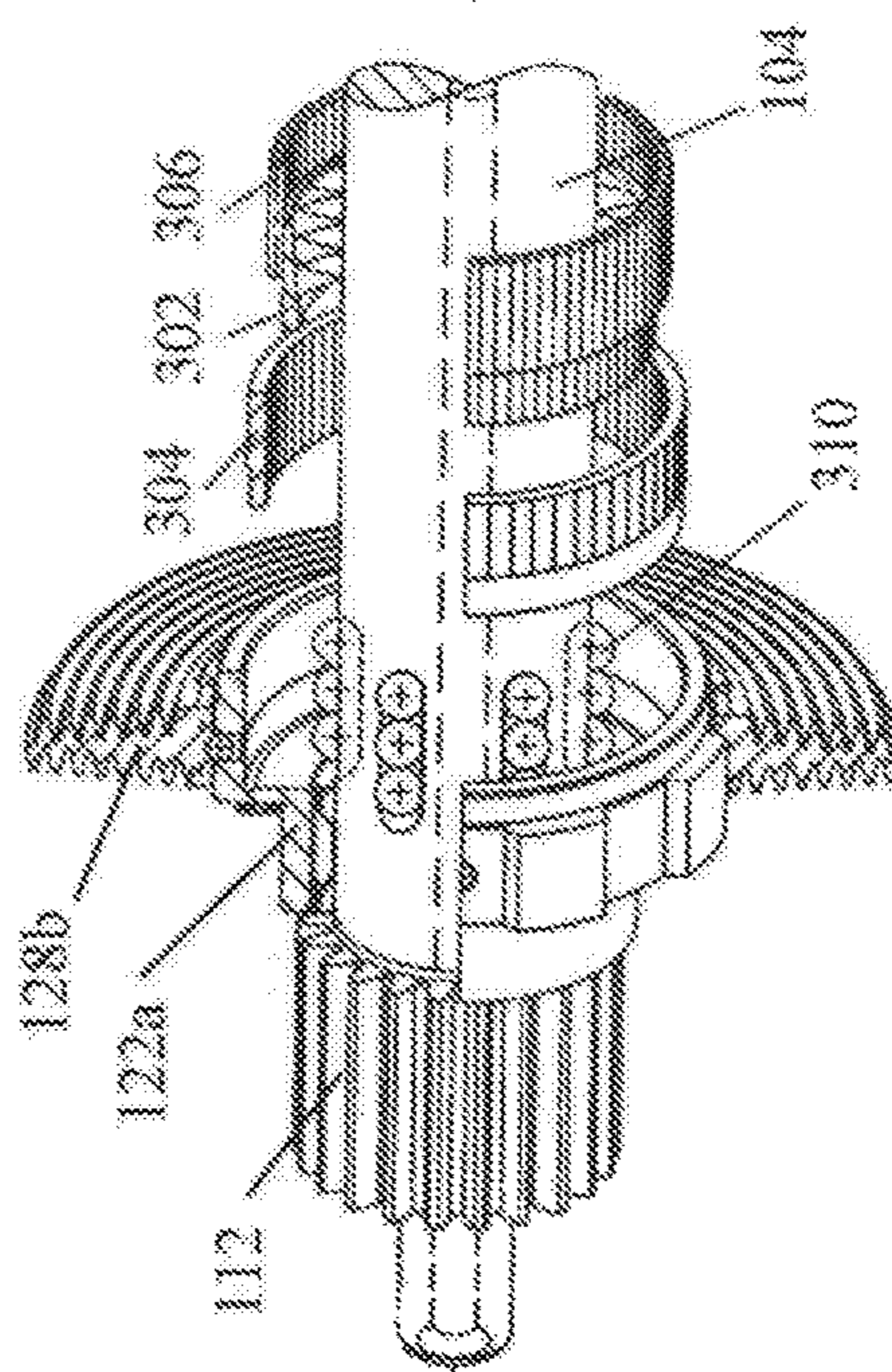
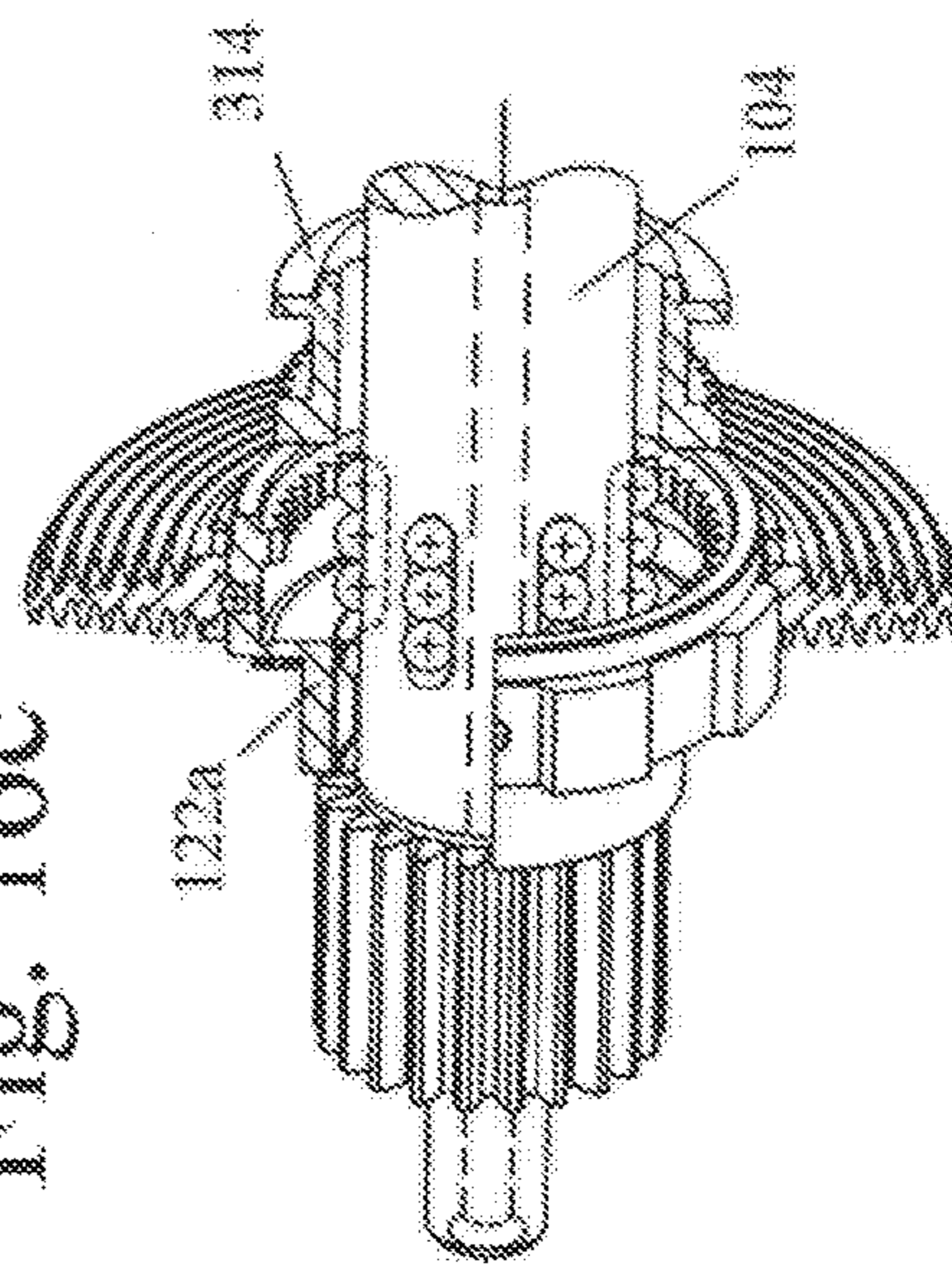
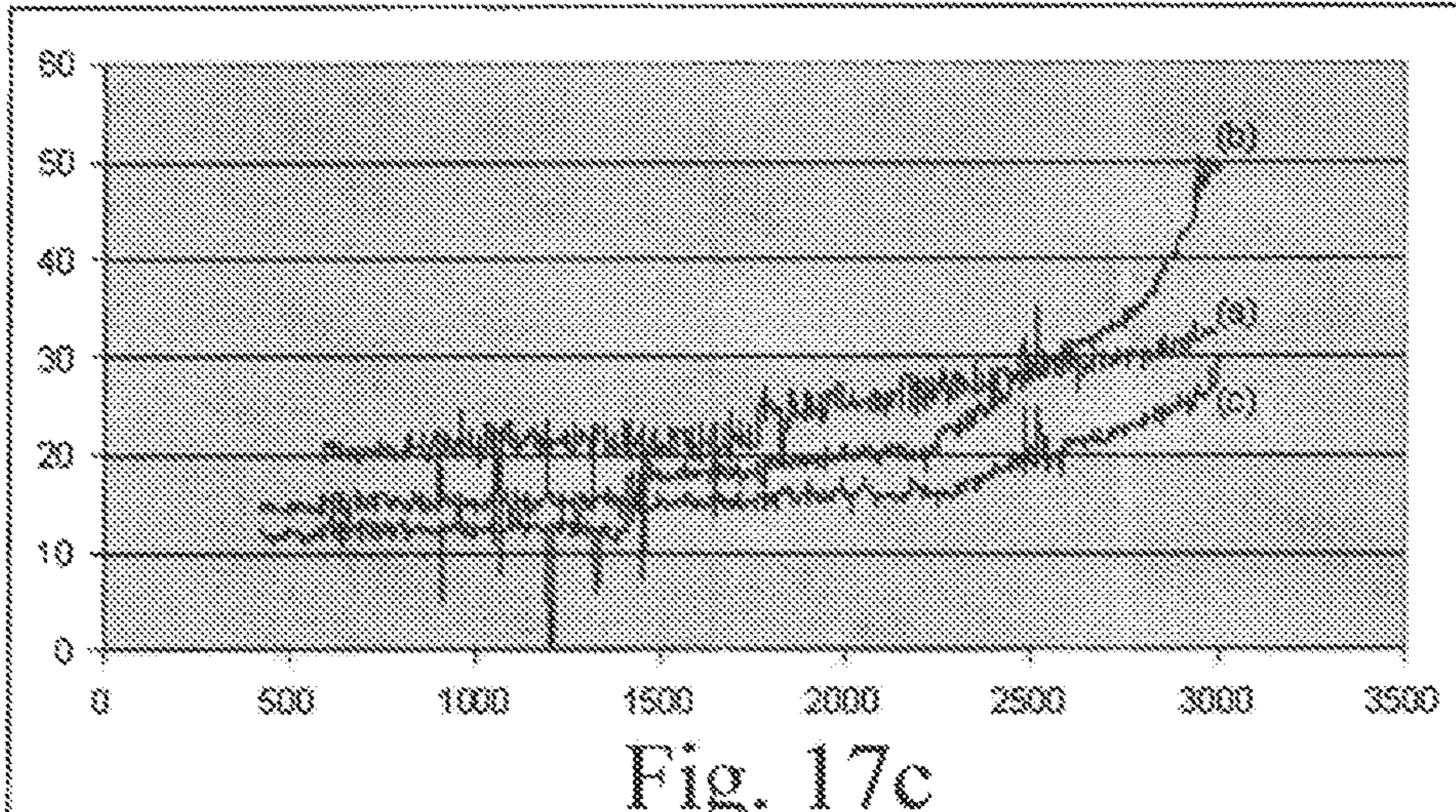
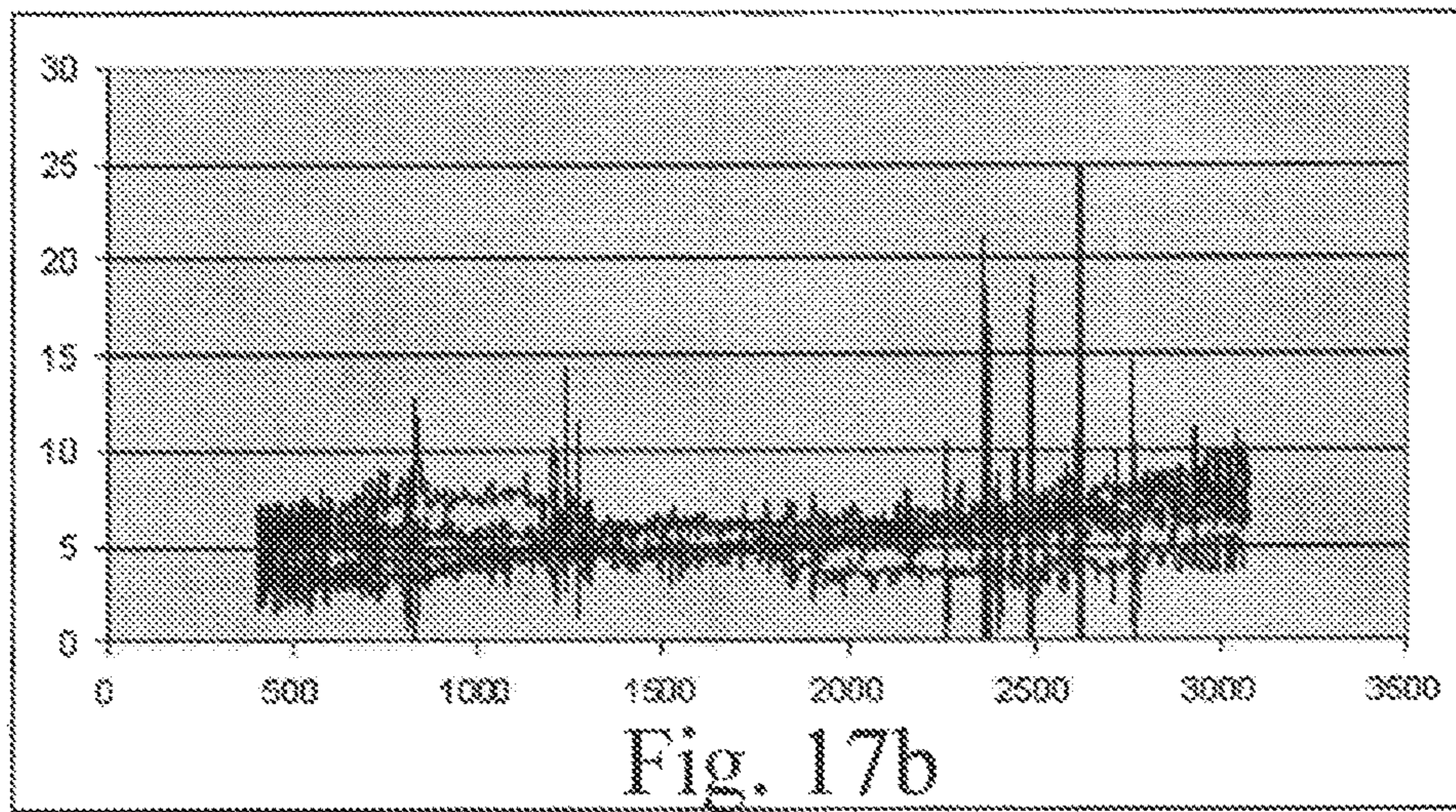
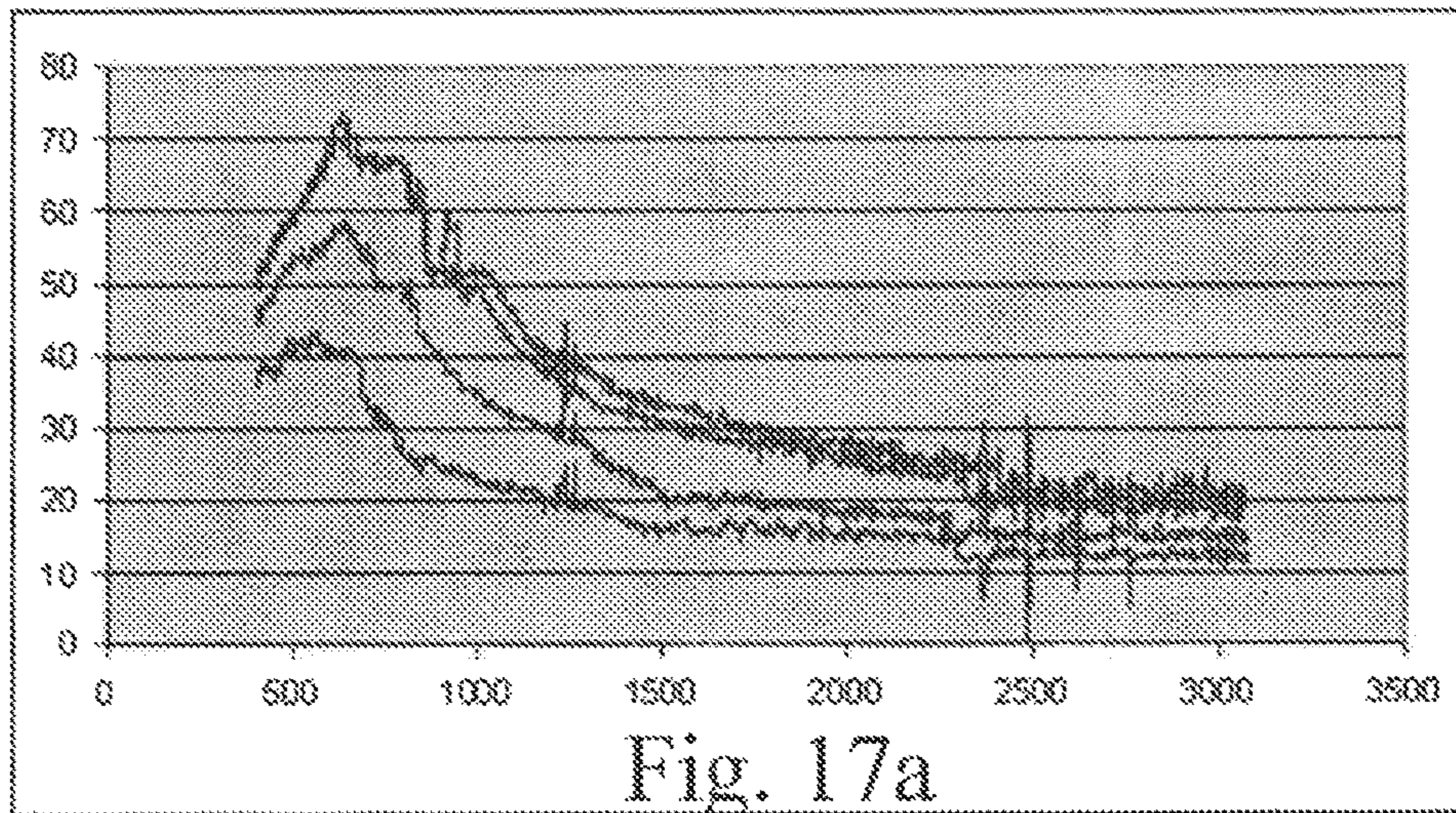


Fig. 16c





CONCENTRIC V-GROOVE COUPLING

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This patent application is a continuation of co-pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/992,462, entitled "Concentric V-Groove Coupling," and filed Nov. 12, 2010, which is a §371 national application of PCT Application No. PCT/CA09/00667, entitled "Concentric V-Groove Coupling," and filed May 15, 2009, which claims the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 61/053,275, entitled "Poly-Cone Coupling," filed May 15, 2008, the disclosures of each of which are incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD

This patent application relates to a coupling for transmitting torque between a torque input member and a torque output member.

BACKGROUND

Over the past 10 years, improvements have been made in the precision manufacture of automatic transmission components. However, the planetary gear-sets and multi-disc/plate couplings of conventional automotive transmissions have undergone little conceptual change since their first introduction in the 1930's.

No-load losses (built-in parasitic losses) in conventional automotive transmissions having three or more planetary gear sets vary between 15,000 and 20,000 watts. Since 70% of all vehicle use requires 20 to 25 hp for highway driving, a parasitic no-load loss of 20,000 watts (at 25 hp) indicates a transmission efficiency of only about 50%. Therefore, although some improvements have been made in automotive transmissions, there has been little improvement in the efficiency of vehicle drive-lines.

SUMMARY

In one aspect, this patent application describes a coupling for transferring torque between a torque input and a torque output. The coupling comprises a pair of clutch end members, a clutch centre member that is disposed between the clutch end members, and an actuator that is coupled to one of the end members. Each end member includes a set of concentric V-grooves disposed on a respective face thereof.

The centre member is axially movable between the end members, and includes a pair of opposing surfaces. One of the opposing surfaces includes a plurality of concentric V-grooves that are configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of one of the end members. Another of the opposing surfaces includes a plurality of concentric V-grooves that are configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of another of the end members. The actuator is configured to simultaneously couple the end members to the centre member by urging the V-grooves of both of the end members into engagement with the V-grooves of the centre member.

In another aspect, this patent application describes a transmission drive-line stage that incorporates the coupling. The transmission drive-line stage comprises a transmission housing, a torque input member, a torque reactive member, a torque output member, and the aforementioned coupling. The torque input, torque reactive member, torque output member and the coupling are all disposed within the trans-

mission housing. The coupling is configured to transfer torque between the torque input member and the torque output member. The torque output member is coupled to the torque input member and the torque reactive member.

In one implementation of the coupling, the actuator is configured to simultaneously couple the end members to the centre member together by urging the face of the one end member against the one surface of the centre member until engagement of the other surface of the centre member with the face of the other end member.

The opposing surfaces of the centre member may be disposed at an acute angle relative to each other, such that the centre member is thinner at its outer end than at its inner end, and the face of each end member is parallel to the associated opposing surface of the centre member. Further, each V-groove comprises a root that is disposed between adjacent peaks, and the roots of the one opposing surface of the centre member may be radially offset from the roots of the other opposing surface.

The coupling may comprise a centering mechanism that is coupled to the centre member and is configured to urge the center member away from the end members upon deactivation of the actuator. The centering mechanism may comprise a ball bearing or a spring coupled to a rotational shaft. The radially inner end of the centre member may be configured for mounting to the rotational shaft, and may comprise a recess that is configured for capturing the centering mechanism therein. In one implementation, the recess comprises a V-shaped pocket.

Each V-groove that is provided on the centre member comprises a root that is disposed between adjacent peaks, and the centre member may comprise at least one oil passage that is configured to facilitate a cascading oil flow to the V-grooves of the end members. Each oil passage may extend radially through a plurality of the roots towards the inner end of the centre member. Preferably, the centre member comprises a plurality of the oil passages, each extending through a respective number of the roots in accordance with the angular position of the respective oil passage.

Each V-groove that is provided on the one end member comprises a root disposed between adjacent peaks, and the one end member may comprise at least one oil passage that is configured to provide a flow of oil to the associated V-grooves of the centre member. Each oil passage may comprise a through-hole that extends axially from one of the roots towards an opposite face of the one end member, and a slot that is provided in the opposite face and extends radially from the through-hole towards the inner end of the end member. Preferably, the one end member comprises a plurality of the oil passages, disposed at varying radial positions around the circumference of the one end member.

In one implementation of the coupling, the centre member comprises a pair of clutch plates, and a spring that is disposed between the clutch plates and urges the clutch plates axially apart. The clutch plates are configured for rotation in unison about a common axis of rotation. One of the clutch plates is axially movable with respect to another of the clutch plates. The one clutch plate comprises one of the opposing surfaces, and the other clutch plate comprises the other opposing surface.

In another aspect, this patent application describes a transmission drive-line stage that comprises a torque input member, a torque reactive member, a torque output member and a pair of torque couplings. The torque output member is coupled to the torque input member and the torque reactive member. The torque couplings are disposed within a trans-

mission case and are configured to transfer torque between the torque input member and the torque output member.

Each torque coupling is configured to provide a respective gear ratio between the torque input member and the torque output member, and comprises a pair of clutch end members, a clutch centre member that is disposed between the respective clutch end members, and an actuator that is coupled to one of the respective end members. Each end member includes a set of concentric V-grooves disposed on a respective face thereof.

The centre member is axially movable between the respective end members, and includes a pair of opposing surfaces. One of the opposing surfaces includes a plurality of concentric V-grooves that are configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of one of the respective end members. Another of the opposing surfaces includes a plurality of concentric V-grooves that are configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of another of the respective end members. The actuator is configured to simultaneously couple the end members to the centre member by engagement of the V-grooves of both of the respective end members with the V-grooves of the centre member.

One of the end members of one of the torque couplings is coupled to the transmission case. The centre member of the one torque coupling is coupled to the torque reactive member. One of the end members of another of the torque couplings is coupled to the torque reactive member. The centre member of the other torque coupling is coupled to the torque input member.

The actuator of the one torque coupling may be operable independently of the actuator of the another torque coupling. Alternately, the actuator of the other torque coupling may be configured to uncouple the end members and the centre member thereof in synchronism with activation of the actuator of the one torque coupling, such that an increase in torque between the end members and the centre member in the one torque coupling is accompanied by a corresponding decrease in torque between the end members and the centre member in the another torque coupling.

The actuator of the one torque coupling may comprise a piston, and the actuator of the other torque coupling may comprise a biasing spring that urges the end members and the centre member thereof together. The piston and the biasing spring are configured to limit drive-line torque discontinuity during the transition between the gear ratios.

In one implementation of the transmission drive-line stage, the centre member of the one torque coupling comprises a pair of clutch plates, and the biasing spring is disposed between the clutch plates and urges the clutch plates axially apart. The clutch plates are configured for rotation in unison about a common axis of rotation. One of the clutch plates is axially movable with respect to another of the clutch plates. The one clutch plate comprises one of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling. The other clutch plate comprises the other of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling and also comprising one of the end members of the other torque coupling.

Each V-groove of the centre member of the one torque coupling comprises a root that is disposed between adjacent peaks, and the roots of the one clutch plate may be radially offset from the roots of the other clutch plate.

The actuator of the other torque coupling may simultaneously couple the end members to the centre members thereof by urging the face of the one end member of the other torque coupling against the one surface of the centre member thereof until engagement of the other surface of the centre member thereof with the face of the other end

member of the other torque coupling. Further, the opposing surfaces of the centre member may be disposed at an acute angle relative to each other such that the centre member is thinner at its outer end than at its inner end.

The other torque coupling may comprise a centering mechanism that is coupled to the centre member thereof and is configured to urge the center member thereof away from the respective end members. The centering mechanism may comprise a ball bearing or a spring coupled to the torque input member. The radially inner end of the centre member of the other torque coupling may comprise a recess that is configured for capturing the centering mechanism therein.

The centre member of the other torque coupling may be selectively coupled to the torque input member via a cone coupling or a synchromesh gear set. The torque input member may comprise a torque input shaft, and a sun gear that is provided on the torque input shaft. The torque reactive member may comprise an annular gear, and the torque output member may comprise a planetary gear set or a coplanar reverted gear loop coupled to the annular gear and the sun gear.

The torque reactive member may comprise at least one axially-extending finger, and the clutch plates may be mounted on the finger and rotate with the torque reactive member. The one clutch plate may be axially movable along the finger, and the other clutch plate may be fixed to the finger. The end plates of the other torque coupling may rotate with the torque reactive member and may be axially movable along the splines.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of a transmission drive-line stage that includes a first embodiment of torque couplings;

FIG. 2 is an exploded view of a longitudinal cross-section of the torque couplings depicted in FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a magnified cross-sectional view of one of the torque couplings, depicting certain optional features thereof;

FIG. 4 is a three-quarter cross-sectional view of an attachment bracket for one of the torque couplings;

FIG. 5.1 is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of the transmission drive-line stage of FIG. 1, with both hydraulic actuators inactive and thereby providing the drive-line stage with a neutral gear;

FIG. 5.2 is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of the transmission drive-line stage with one of the hydraulic actuators active and thereby providing the drive-line stage with a X^1 gear-ratio;

FIG. 5.3 is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of the transmission drive-line stage with another one of the hydraulic actuators active and thereby providing the drive-line stage with a X^0 gear-ratio;

FIG. 6 is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of a transmission drive-line stage that includes a second embodiment of torque couplings;

FIG. 7 is an exploded view of a longitudinal cross-section of the torque couplings depicted in FIG. 6;

FIG. 8 is an exploded view of the torque couplings, depicting certain additional features thereof;

FIG. 9 is a magnified cross-sectional view of one of the torque couplings shown in FIG. 6, depicting certain optional features thereof;

FIG. 10a is a magnified cross-sectional view of one of the torque couplings shown in FIG. 6, depicting one implementation of the optional centering mechanism thereof;

5

FIG. 10*b* is a magnified elevation of the centering mechanism depicted in FIG. 10*a*;

FIG. 11*a* is a magnified cross-sectional view of one of the torque couplings, depicting a second implementation of the optional centering mechanism;

FIG. 11*b* is a magnified elevation of the centering mechanism depicted in FIG. 11*a*;

FIG. 12 is a magnified cross-sectional view of one of the torque couplings, depicting a third implementation of the optional centering mechanism

FIG. 13 is a combined elevation and end view of the centre member of one of torque couplings, depicting certain optional features thereof;

FIG. 14 is a combined elevation and end view of one of the end members of one of torque couplings, depicting certain optional features thereof;

FIG. 15.1 is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of the transmission drive-line stage of FIG. 6, with the hydraulic actuator inactive and thereby providing the drive-line stage with a X^1 gear-ratio;

FIG. 15.2 is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of the transmission drive-line stage with another the hydraulic actuator active and thereby providing the drive-line stage with a X^0 gear-ratio;

FIG. 16*a* is a three-quarter cross-sectional view of an optional cone coupling for one of the torque couplings depicted in FIG. 6;

FIG. 16*b* is a three-quarter cross-sectional view of an alternate cone coupling;

FIG. 16*c* is a three-quarter cross-sectional view of an optional synchromesh gear set for one of the torque couplings;

FIG. 17*a* depicts open-coupling parasitic/no-load drag test results for multi-disc/plate coupling;

FIG. 17*b* depicts open-coupling parasitic/no-load drag test results for one of the torque coupling; and

FIG. 17*c* compares oil squish and no-load drag test results for different gear sets.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Transmission Drive-Line Stage 100

Turning now to FIG. 1, a transmission drive-line stage, denoted generally as 100, is shown comprising a transmission housing (partially shown) 102, a torque input member, a torque reactive member, a torque output member, and a pair of torque couplings 110. The torque input member, the torque reactive member, the torque output member, and the torque couplings 110 are all disposed within the transmission housing 102. As will become apparent, the transmission drive-line stage 100, when installed in a vehicle, provides a neutral/vehicle launch capability.

The torque couplings 110 (denoted individually as 110*a*, 110*b*) are each configured to transfer torque between the torque input member and the torque output member. Further, when the torque couplings 110*a*, 110*b* are active, each torque coupling 110 provides a respective gear ratio between the torque input member and the torque output member.

In the embodiment shown, the torque input member comprises an input shaft 104, and a sun gear 112 that is integral with the input shaft 104. The input shaft 104 is supported in the transmission housing 102 by bearings that allow the input shaft 104 to rotate about its longitudinal axis. However, the sun gear 112 need not be integral with the input shaft 104 but may instead be coupled to the input shaft 104 by a clutch or synchromesh gear set.

6

In the embodiment shown, the torque reactive member comprises an annular gear 106, and the torque output member is configured as a planetary gear set. As such, the torque output member comprises a cage 108, a set of planetary gears 112, and an output shaft 116. The cage 108 is integral with the output shaft 116, and supports the planetary gears 112. The planetary gears 112 mesh with the annular gear 106 and the sun gear 112, and are retained in place within the annular gear 106 by the cage 108. The output shaft 116 is supported in the transmission housing 102 by bearings that allow the output shaft 116 to rotate about its longitudinal axis.

As shown, preferably the axis of rotation of the output shaft 116 coincides with the axis of rotation of the input shaft 104. However, the transmission drive-line stage 100 may be implemented using alternate orientations of the input shaft 104 and the output shaft 116.

Further, since the planetary gears 112 mesh with the annular gear 106 and the sun gear 112, the torque output member is thereby coupled to the torque input member and the torque reactive member. However, although the torque output member is shown configured as a planetary gear set, the torque output member may comprise alternate gear configurations, including the coplanar reverted gear loop previously described by the instant inventor in U.S. Pat. No. 6,126,566.

As shown in FIG. 2, a continuous cylindrical axial extension 118 extends from the annular gear 106, and comprises an outer splined surface 118*a*, and an inner splined surface 118*b*. At the end of the axial extension 118 that is remote from the annular gear 106, the inner splined surface 118*b* includes a channel 119 for retaining a retaining ring therein. As shown, the inner splined surface 118*b* is stepped, such that the internal radius thereof is greater proximate the retaining channel 119 than proximate the annular gear 106.

Similarly, a cylindrical axial extension 120 (see FIG. 1) extends axially from the sun gear 112. A stepped attachment bracket 122 is coupled to the axial extension 120, and includes an outer splined surface 123.

The outermost torque coupling 110*a* comprises a pair of clutch end members 124*a*, 126*a*, a clutch centre member 128*a*, and an actuator 130*a* (FIG. 1). The centre member 128*a* is disposed between the clutch end members 124*a*, 126*a*, is preferably configured as a disc and, therefore, has a pair of opposing surfaces. One of the surfaces of the centre member 128*a* includes a plurality of concentric V-grooves 132*a*, and the opposite surface of the centre member 128*a* also includes a plurality of concentric V-grooves 134*a*. As shown, each V-groove 132*a*, 134*a* comprises a root disposed between adjacent peaks.

The centre member 128*a* also includes a splined inner end 129*a* that is configured for engagement with the outer splined surface 118*a* of the axial extension 118. As a result, the centre member 128*a* rotates with the annular gear 106, and is axially movable between the end members 124*a*, 126*a* along the outer surface of the axial extension 118.

The end members 124*a*, 126*a* are disposed around the outer surface of the axial extension 118. The left end member 124*a* includes a splined outer end 125*a* that is configured for engagement with an inner splined surface (not shown) of the transmission housing 102. Similarly, the right end member 126*a* includes a splined outer end 127*a* that is configured for engagement with the inner splined surface of the transmission housing 102. As a result, the end members 124*a*, 126*a* are fixed to the transmission housing 102, but are axially movable along the transmission housing 102 via the splined outer ends 125*a*, 127*a*.

Preferably, the outermost torque coupling **110a** also includes a wave spring **140a** that is disposed between the end members **124a**, **126a**, radially outwards from centre member **128a**, and urges the end members **124a**, **126a** apart.

Each end member **124a**, **126a** is preferably configured as a disc and, therefore, has a pair of opposing faces. One of the faces of the left end member **124a** is adjacent the clutch centre member **128a**, and includes a set of concentric V-grooves **136a** that is configured to mesh with the V-grooves **132a** of the clutch centre member **128a**. The opposite face of the left end member **124a** is substantially planar. Similarly, one of the faces of the right end member **126a** is adjacent the clutch centre member **128a**, and includes a set of concentric V-grooves **138a** that is configured to mesh with the V-grooves **134a** of the clutch centre member **128a**. The opposite face of the right end member **126a** is substantially planar. Again, each V-groove **136a**, **138a** comprises a root disposed between adjacent peaks.

In the embodiment shown in FIG. 1, the actuator **130a** is disposed adjacent the right end member **126a**. The actuator **130a** may be configured as a hydraulically-activated piston, a pneumatically-activated piston, or any other suitable pressure-fed actuator, and is activated by external feed line **131a**. When activated, the actuator **130a** is forced under pressure axially against the right end member **126a**, which urges the V-grooves **136a**, **138a** of the end members **124a**, **126a** into engagement with the V-grooves **132a**, **134a** of the centre member **128a**, and thereby couple the end members **124a**, **126a** and the centre member **128a** together.

The inner torque coupling **110b** comprises a pair of clutch end members **124b**, **126b**, a clutch centre member **128b**, and an actuator **130b** (FIG. 1). The centre member **128b** is disposed between the clutch end members **124b**, **126b**, is preferably configured as a disc and, therefore, has a pair of opposing surfaces. One of the surfaces of the centre member **128b** includes a plurality of concentric V-grooves **132b**, and the opposite surface of the centre member **128b** also includes a plurality of concentric V-grooves **134b**. As shown, each V-groove **132b**, **134b** comprises a root disposed between adjacent peaks.

The centre member **128b** also includes a splined inner end **129b** that is configured for engagement with the outer splined surface **123** of the stepped attachment bracket **122**. As a result, the centre member **128a** rotates with the input shaft **104**, and is axially movable between the end members **124b**, **126b** along the outer surface of the stepped attachment bracket **122**.

The end members **124b**, **126b** are disposed around the outer surface of the stepped attachment bracket **122**. The left end member **124b** includes a splined outer end **125b** that is configured for engagement with the inner splined surface **118b** of the axial extension **118**. Similarly, the right end member **126b** includes a splined outer end **127b** that is configured for engagement with the inner splined surface **118b** of the axial extension **118**. As a result, the end members **124b**, **126b** rotate with the annular gear **106**.

Further, the left end member **124b** is axially movable along the radially inner portion of the inner splined surface **118b** (the portion of the inner splined surface **118b** adjacent the annular gear **106**), and the right end member **126b** is axially movable along the radially outer portion of the inner splined surface **118b** (the portion of the inner splined surface **118b** between the step of the inner splined surface **118** and the retaining ring that is retained in the retaining channel **119**). Preferably, the innermost torque coupling **110b** also includes a wave spring **140b** that is disposed between the

end members **124b**, **126b**, radially outwards from centre member **128b**, and urges the end members **124b**, **126b** apart.

Each end member **124b**, **126b** is preferably configured as a disc and, therefore, has a pair of opposing faces. One of the faces of the left end member **124b** is adjacent the clutch centre member **128b**, and includes a set of concentric V-grooves **136b** that is configured to mesh with the V-grooves **132b** of the clutch centre member **128b**. The opposite face of the left end member **124b** is substantially planar. Similarly, one of the faces of the right end member **126b** is adjacent the clutch centre member **128b**, and includes a set of concentric V-grooves **138b** that is configured to mesh with the V-grooves **134b** of the clutch centre member **128b**. The opposite face of the right end member **126b** is substantially planar. Again, each V-groove **136b**, **138b** comprises a root disposed between adjacent peaks.

In the embodiment shown in FIG. 1, the actuator **130b** is disposed adjacent the right end member **126b**. The actuator **130b** may be configured as a hydraulically-activated piston, a pneumatically-activated piston, or any other suitable pressure-fed actuator, and is activated by external feed line **131b**. Due to the inward location of the actuator **130b**, the external feed line **131b** extends to the actuator **130b** through high pressure seals **133** that are disposed between the actuator **130a** and the actuator **130b**. When activated, the actuator **130b** is forced under pressure axially against the right end member **126b**, which urges the V-grooves **136b**, **138b** of the end members **124b**, **126b** into engagement with the V-grooves **132b**, **134b** of the centre member **128b**, and thereby couple the end members **124b**, **126b** and the centre member **128b** together.

FIG. 3 is a close-up view of one advantageous embodiment of the inner torque coupling **110b**. Since the amount of force that is required to impart a particular torque to a disc decreases with the radius of the disc, the opposing surfaces of the centre member **128b** may be disposed at an acute angle relative to each other, such that the centre member **128b** is thinner at its radial outer end than at its radial inner end. Further, to facilitate the reduction in the thickness of the centre member, the roots of one opposing surface of the centre member **128b** may be radially offset from the roots of the other opposing surface of the centre member **128b**. Still, as shown, the faces of the end members **124b**, **126b** adjacent the clutch centre member **128b** are parallel to the associated surfaces of the centre member **128b**.

Preferably, one or both of the torque couplings **110** comprise a centering mechanism that is coupled to the respective centre member **128** and is configured to urge the center member **128** away from the associated end members **124**, **126** upon deactivation of the actuator **130**. The centering mechanism may comprise a ball bearing, or a spring. For example, as shown in FIG. 4, the outer splined surface **123** of the stepped attachment bracket **122** may be configured with a plurality of wells **142**, each having a crimp **143** for retaining a respective ball bearing **144** therein, and the radially inner end of the centre member **128b** of the innermost torque coupling **110b** may comprise a recess **152b** that is configured for capturing a portion of the ball bearing **144**. As shown in FIG. 3, the recess **152b** may comprise a V-shaped pocket.

Similarly, the outer splined surface **118a** of the axial extension **118** may be configured with a plurality of wells **148**, each having a crimp **149** for retaining a respective ball bearing **150** therein, and the radially inner end of the centre member **128a** of the outermost torque coupling **110a** may comprise a recess **152a** that is configured for capturing a

portion of the ball bearing 150. As shown in FIG. 2, the recess 152a may comprise a V-shaped pocket.

Preferably, the centre member 128 of one or both of the torque couplings 110 comprises at least one oil passage that is configured to facilitate a cascading oil flow to the V-grooves 136, 138 of the associated end members 124, 126. Therefore, the centre member 128 may comprise at least one oil passage that extends radially through a plurality of the roots of the V-grooves 132, 134 towards the radial inner end of the centre member 128. Preferably, the centre member 128 comprises a plurality of the oil passages, each extending through a respective number of the roots of the V-grooves 132, 134 in accordance with the angular position of the oil passage.

Preferably, one or both of the end members of one or both of the torque couplings 110 comprises at least one oil passage that is configured to provide a flow of oil to the V-grooves of the centre member 128 even when the planar face of the end member abuts against a fixed transmission component.

For instance, the oil passage may be provided in the right end member 126b of the innermost torque coupling 110b. As shown in FIG. 3, the oil passage comprises a through-hole 154b that extends axially from one of the roots of the V-grooves 138b towards the planar face thereof, and a slot 155b that is provided in the planar face and extends radially from the through-hole 154b towards the radial inner end of the right end member 126b. Preferably, the end member is provided with a plurality of the oil passages, with the through-hole of each oil passage being disposed at varying radial positions around the end member.

Gear Ratio Transitions of Transmission Drive-Line Stage 100

FIG. 5.1 depicts the transmission drive-line stage 100, with both hydraulic actuators 130 inactive. In this mode, the wave spring 140a of the outermost torque coupling 110a urges the end members 124a, 126a apart. Since, in this mode, the actuator 130a does not apply any axial forces to the centre member 128a, the ball bearing 150 (captured within the axial extension 118a) remains substantially centred within the recess 152a of the centre member 128a. As a result, the ball bearing 150 provides a centering action that maintains the centre member 128a away from the end members 124a, 126a, thereby disengaging the V-grooves 132a, 134a of the centre member 128a from the V-grooves 136a, 138a of the end members 124a, 126a, and uncoupling the centre member 128a from the end members 124a, 126a.

Similarly, the wave spring 140b of the innermost torque coupling 110b urges the end members 124b, 126b apart. Since, in this mode, the actuator 130b does not apply any axial forces to the centre member 128b, the ball bearing 144 (captured within the axial extension 120) remains substantially centred within the recess 152b of the centre member 128b. As a result, the ball bearing 144 provides a centering action that maintains the centre member 128b away from the end members 124b, 126b, thereby disengaging the V-grooves 132b, 134b of the centre member 128b from the V-grooves 136b, 138b of the end members 124b, 126b, and uncoupling the centre member 128b from the end members 124b, 126b.

Therefore, in the mode depicted in FIG. 5.1, the torque of the input shaft 104 is not transmitted to the output shaft 116 by either of the torque couplings 110a, 110b, thereby providing the transmission drive-line stage 100 with a neutral gear.

FIG. 5.2 depicts the transmission drive-line stage 100, with the actuator 130a of the outermost torque coupling

110a active, and the actuator 130b of the innermost torque coupling 110b inactive. In this mode, the actuator 130a urges the right end member 126a towards the left end member 124a, thereby compressing the wave spring 140a of the outermost torque coupling 110a between the end members 124a, 126a. This axial movement of the right end member 126a urges the V-grooved face of the right end member 126a against the associated surface of the centre member 128a, thereby axially urging the centre member 128a towards the left end member 124a until the opposite surface of the centre member 128a engages the associated V-grooved face of the left end member 124a. At the same time, the ball bearing 150 (captured within the axial extension 118a) becomes displaced from the centre of the recess 152a of the centre member 128a. As a result, the V-grooves 132a, 134a of the centre member 128a engage the V-grooves 136a, 138a of the end members 124a, 126a, thereby coupling the centre member 128a to the end members 124a, 126a.

Since the actuator 130b is inactive, the wave spring 140b of the innermost torque coupling 110b urges the end members 124b, 126b apart. Since, in this mode, the actuator 130b does not apply any axial forces to the centre member 128b, the ball bearing 144 (captured within the axial extension 120) remains substantially centred within the recess 152b of the centre member 128b. As a result, the ball bearing 144 provides a centering action that maintains the centre member 128b away from the end members 124b, 126b, thereby disengaging the V-grooves 132b, 134b of the centre member 128b from the V-grooves 136b, 138b of the end members 124b, 126b, and uncoupling the centre member 128b from the end members 124b, 126b.

Since the end members 124a, 126a are fixed to the transmission housing 102, and the centre member 128a is coupled to and rotates with the axial extension 118a, the annular gear 106 becomes grounded to the transmission housing 102 via the outermost torque coupling 110a, thereby causing the planetary gears 114 to rotate relative to the annular gear 106 when the sun gear 112 rotates. As a result, in the mode depicted in FIG. 5.2, the torque of the input shaft 104 is transmitted to the output shaft 116 through the sun gear 112, the planetary gears 114, the annular gear 106 and the cage 108, thereby providing the transmission drive-line stage 100 with a gear-ratio X^1 that is determined by the relative sizes of the sun gear 112, the planetary gears 114 and the annular gear 106.

FIG. 5.3 depicts the transmission drive-line stage 100, with the actuator 130a of the outermost torque coupling 110a inactive, and the actuator 130b of the innermost torque coupling 110b active. In this mode, the actuator 130b urges the right end member 126b towards the left end member 124b, thereby compressing the wave spring 140b of the innermost torque coupling 110b between the end members 124b, 126b. This axial movement of the right end member 126b urges the V-grooved face of the right end member 126b against the associated surface of the centre member 128b, thereby axially urging the centre member 128b towards the left end member 124b until the opposite surface of the centre member 128b engages the associated V-grooved face of the left end member 124b. At the same time, the ball bearing 144 (captured within the axial extension 122) becomes displaced from the centre of the recess 152b of the centre member 128b. As a result, the V-grooves 132b, 134b of the centre member 128b engage the V-grooves 136b, 138b of the end members 124b, 126b, thereby coupling the centre member 128b to the end members 124b, 126b.

Since the actuator 130a is inactive, the wave spring 140a of the outermost torque coupling 110a urges the end mem-

bers **124a**, **126a** apart. Since, in this mode, the actuator **130a** does not apply any axial forces to the centre member **128a**, the ball bearing **150** (captured within the axial extension **118a**) remains substantially centred within the recess **152a** of the centre member **128a**. As a result, the ball bearing **150** provides a centering action that maintains the centre member **128a** away from the end members **124a**, **126a**, thereby disengaging the V-grooves **132a**, **134a** of the centre member **128a** from the V-grooves **136a**, **138a** of the end members **124a**, **126a**, and uncoupling the centre member **128a** from the end members **124a**, **126a**.

Since the end members **124b**, **126b** are coupled to and rotate with the axial extension **118a**, and the centre member **128b** is coupled to and rotates with the axial extension **122**, the input shaft **104** becomes coupled to the annular gear **106** via the innermost torque coupling **110b**, thereby causing the planetary gears **114** to rotate in unison with the annular gear **106** when the sun gear **112** rotates. As a result, in the mode depicted in FIG. 5.3, the torque of the input shaft **104** is transmitted to the output shaft **116** through the sun gear **112**, the planetary gears **114** and the cage **108**, thereby providing the transmission drive-line stage **100** with a 1:1 gear-ratio X^0 .

As will be apparent, each torque coupling **110a**, **110b** provides a respective gear ratio between the torque input member and the torque output member of the transmission drive-line stage **100**. However, since the actuators **130** of the torque coupling **110** are operable independently of each other, to avoid damage to the transmission drive-line stage **100** the torque couplings **110** should not be fully engaged simultaneously. Rather, activation of one of the torque couplings **110a**, **110b** should be coordinated with deactivation of the other of the torque couplings **110a**, **110b** to avoid discontinuity during the transition between the gear ratios. Transmission Drive-Line Stage **200**

An alternate transmission drive-line stage, denoted generally as **200**, is shown in FIG. 6. Apart from the torque couplings, the transmission drive-line stage **200** is substantially similar to the transmission drive-line stage **100**. However, in contrast to the transmission drive-line stage **100**, the transmission drive-line stage **200**, when installed in a vehicle, does not provide a neutral/vehicle launch capability.

The transmission drive-line stage **200** comprises the transmission housing (partially shown) **102**, the torque input member, the torque reactive member, the torque output member, and a pair of torque couplings **210**. The torque input member, the torque reactive member, the torque output member, and the torque couplings **210** are all disposed within the transmission housing **102**. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 6, the torque input member again comprises the input shaft **104**, and the sun gear **112** integral with the input shaft **104**. However, as will be described below, the sun gear **112** need not be integral with the input shaft **104** but may instead be coupled to the input shaft **104** by a clutch or synchromesh gear set.

In the embodiment shown, the torque reactive member comprises the annular gear **106**, and the torque output member is again configured as a planetary gear set. As such, the torque output member comprises the cage **108**, the set of planetary gears **112**, and the output shaft **116**. However, as previously discussed, the torque output member may comprise alternate gear configurations, including the coplanar reverted gear loop previously described by the instant inventor in U.S. Pat. No. 6,126,566.

As shown in FIG. 7, a cylindrical axial extension **218** extends from the annular gear **106**, and comprises a smooth outer surface, and an inner stepped surface **218b**. At the end

of the axial extension **218** that is remote from the annular gear **106**, the inner stepped surface **218b** includes a channel **219** for retaining a retaining ring **223** therein. As shown, the internal radius of the inner stepped surface **218b** is greater proximate the retaining channel **219** than proximate the annular gear **106**. The axial extension **218** is also segmented around its circumference and, therefore, comprises a plurality of arcuate fingers **221** that extend axially from the annular gear **106**.

The torque couplings **210** are disposed within a substantially cylindrical case **203**. The cylindrical case **203** is disposed within the transmission housing **102**, and comprises a planar end wall and a side wall. The side wall comprises a splined outer surface **270**, and a stepped inner surface. At the end of the side wall that is remote from the end wall, the stepped inner surface includes a channel **272** for retaining a retaining ring **276** therein. The side wall of the cylindrical case **203** is also segmented around its circumference and, therefore, comprises a plurality of arcuate fingers **274** that extend axially from the end wall towards the annular gear **106**.

The splined outer surface **270** engages the inner splined surface of the transmission housing **102** (see FIG. 8). A finger spring **278** is provided between the transmission housing **102** and the end wall of the cylindrical case **203**, and urges the cylindrical case **203** axially away from the transmission housing **102**. As a result, the cylindrical case **203** is prevented from rotated relative to the transmission housing **102**, but is axially movable within the transmission housing **102** via the splined outer surface **270**.

The outermost torque coupling **210a** comprises a pair of clutch end members **224a**, **226a**, and a pair of co-joined clutch centre members **228a.1**, **228a.2**. The centre members **228a** are disposed axially side-by-side between the clutch end members **224a**, **226a**. Each centre member **228a.1**, **228a.2** is preferably configured as a disc or clutch plate and, therefore, has a pair of opposing surfaces.

One of the surfaces of the left centre member **228a.1** is substantially planar. The opposite surface of the left centre member **228a.1** includes a plurality of concentric V-grooves **232a** that are disposed proximate the radial outer end of the centre member **228a.1**, and a set of concentric V-grooves **238b** that are disposed proximate the radial inner end of the centre member **228a.1**. As shown, each V-groove **232a**, **238b** comprises a root disposed between adjacent peaks.

The left centre member **228a.1** also includes a plurality of arcuate slots **229.1**, disposed radially between the V-grooves **232a** and the V-grooves **238a**, that are configured to receive the arcuate fingers **221** of the axial extension **218** therein. As a result, the left centre member **228a.1** rotates with the annular gear **106**. The inner stepped surface **218b** of the axial extension **218** is dimensioned to allow the left centre member **228a.1** to move axially with respect to the right centre member **228a.2**, along the portion of the arcuate fingers **221** substantially between the annular gear **106** (as limited by the thickness of the left end member **224a**) and the step of the inner stepped surface **218b**.

One of the surfaces of the right centre member **228a.2** includes a plurality of concentric V-grooves **234a** disposed proximate the radial outer end thereof. The opposite surface of the right centre member **228a.2** includes a substantially planar face proximate the radial outer end of the centre member **228a.2**, and a continuous channel **237** proximate the radial inner end of the centre member **228a.2**. As shown, each V-groove **234a** comprises a root disposed between adjacent peaks.

The right centre member **228a.2** also includes a plurality of arcuate slots **229.2**, disposed radially between the V-grooves **234a** and the continuous channel **237**, that are configured to receive the arcuate fingers **221** of the axial extension **218** therein. As a result, the right centre member **228a.2** rotates in unison about a common axis with the annular gear **106** and the left centre member **228a.1**. However, the inner stepped surface **218b** of the axial extension **218** is dimensioned to confine the right centre member **228a.2** to the portion of the arcuate fingers **221** between the step of the inner stepped surface **218b** and the retaining ring **223** that is retained in the retaining channel **219**. As a result, the inner stepped surface **218b** is configured to prevent the right centre member **228a.2** from moving axially along the arcuate fingers **221**.

A wave spring **239** is disposed between the left centre member **228a.1** and the right centre member **228a.2**, within the continuous channel **237**, and urges the left centre member **228a.1** axially away from the right centre member **228a.2** along the arcuate fingers **221**. A flat ring **241** is also disposed between the left centre member **228a.1** and the right centre member **228a.2**, radially outwards from the wave spring **239**, and limits the minimum axial separation between the left centre member **228a.1** and the right centre member **228a.2**.

The end members **224a**, **226a** are disposed around the outer surface of the axial extension **218**. The left end member **224a** includes a splined outer end **225a** that is configured for engagement with the axially-extending fingers **274** of the cylindrical case **203**. Further, the splined outer end **225a** is axially fixed to the radially outermost portion of the stepped inner surface of the cylindrical case **203** (the portion of the inner splined surface **118b** between the step of the inner stepped surface and the retaining ring **276** that is retained in the retaining channel **272**).

Similarly, the right end member **226a** includes a splined outer end **227a** that is configured for engagement with the axially-extending fingers **274**. However, the splined outer end **227a** is axially movable within the radially innermost portion of the stepped inner surface of the cylindrical case **203** (the portion of the inner splined surface **118b** substantially between the step of the inner stepped surface and the end wall of the cylindrical case **203**). As a result, the end members **224a**, **226a** rotate with the cylindrical case **203**, and the right end member **226a** is axially movable within the cylindrical case **203**.

Each end member **224a**, **226a** is preferably configured as a disc and, therefore, has a pair of opposing faces. One of the faces of the left end member **224a** is adjacent the left centre member **228a.1**, and includes a set of concentric V-grooves **236a** that is configured to mesh with the V-grooves **232a** of the left centre member **228a.1**. The opposite face of the left end member **224a** is substantially planar. Similarly, one of the faces of the right end member **226a** is adjacent the right centre member **228a.2**, and includes a set of concentric V-grooves **238a** that is configured to mesh with the V-grooves **234a** of the right centre member **228a.2**. The opposite face of the right end member **226a** is substantially planar. Again, each V-groove **236a**, **238a** comprises a root disposed between adjacent peaks.

The cylindrical case **203** is provided with a finger spring **245** that urges the right end member **226a** axially towards the end wall of the cylindrical case **203**. The substantially planar face of the right end member **226a** includes an axially-extending apron that is disposed around the circumference of the right end member **226a**, radially inwards of the side wall of the cylindrical case **203**. The apron, together

with the cylindrical case **203**, functions as an actuator **230a**. The actuator **230a** may be configured as a hydraulically-activated piston, a pneumatically-activated piston, or any other suitable pressure-fed actuator, and is activated by external feed line **131a**. When activated, the actuator **230a** forces the right end member **226a** axially against the right centre member **228a.2**, and pulls the left end member **224a** axially against the left centre member **228a.1**, which causes the V-grooves **236a**, **238a** of the end members **224a**, **226a** to engage the V-grooves **232a**, **234a** of the centre members **228a**, and thereby couple the end members **224a**, **226a** and the centre members **228a** together.

The inner torque coupling **210b** comprises the clutch left end member **124b**, the radially inner portion of the left centre member **228a.1**, the clutch centre member **128b**, and the wave spring **239** (functions as an actuator). The centre member **128b** is disposed between the clutch end member **124b** and the left centre member **228a.1**, is preferably configured as a disc and, therefore, has a pair of opposing surfaces. One of the surfaces of the centre member **128b** includes a plurality of concentric V-grooves **132b**, and the opposite surface of the centre member **128b** also includes a plurality of concentric V-grooves **134b**. As shown, each V-groove **132b**, **134b** comprises a root disposed between adjacent peaks.

The centre member **128b** also includes a splined inner end **129b** that is configured for engagement with the outer splined surface **123** of the stepped attachment bracket **122**. As a result, the centre member **128a** rotates with the input shaft **104**, and is axially movable between the end member **124b** and the left centre member **228a.1**, along the outer surface of the stepped attachment bracket **122**.

The left end member **124b** and the radially inner portion of the left centre member **228a.1** are disposed around the outer surface of the stepped attachment bracket **122**. The left end member **124b** includes a splined outer end **125b** that is configured for engagement with the axially-extending fingers **221** of the axial extension **218**. As a result, the left end member **124b** and the left centre member **228a.1** rotate in unison with the annular gear **106**.

Further, the left end member **124b** is axially movable along the portion of the arcuate fingers **221** substantially between the annular gear **106** and the step of the inner stepped surface **218b** (as limited by the thickness of the centre member **128b**). As mentioned, the left centre member **228a.1** is axially movable along the portion of the arcuate fingers **221** substantially between the annular gear **106** (as limited by the thickness of the left end member **224a**) and the step of the inner stepped surface **218b**.

The left end member **124b** is preferably configured as a disc and, therefore, has a pair of opposing faces. One of the faces of the left end member **124b** is adjacent the clutch centre member **128b**, and includes a set of concentric V-grooves **136b** that is configured to mesh with the V-grooves **132b** of the clutch centre member **128b**. The opposite face of the left end member **124b** is substantially planar. Similarly, the set of concentric V-grooves **238b** that is provided on the radially inner portion of the left centre member **228a.1** is configured to mesh with the V-grooves **134b** of the clutch centre member **128b**. Again, each V-groove **136b**, **238b** comprises a root disposed between adjacent peaks.

Unlike the innermost torque coupling **110b** of the transmission drive-line stage **100**, the innermost torque coupling **210b** does not include its own independently-operable actuator. Instead, as mentioned, the actuator for the torque coupling **210b** comprises the wave spring **239**. When the

actuator **230a** of the outermost torque coupling **210a** is inactive, the wave spring **239** forces the left centre member **228a.1** axially against the centre member **128b** which, in turn, forces the centre member **128b** axially against the left end member **124b**. As a result, the V-grooves **136b**, **238b** engage the V-grooves **132b**, **134b** of the centre member **128b**, thereby coupling the end members **124b**, the left centre member **228a.1**, and the centre member **128b** together.

FIG. 9 is a close-up view of one advantageous embodiment of the inner torque coupling **210b**. As discussed, since the amount of force that is required to impart a particular torque to a disc decreases with the radius of the disc, the opposing surfaces of the centre member **128b** may be disposed at an acute angle relative to each other, such that the centre member **128b** is thinner at its radial outer end than at its radial inner end. Further, to facilitate the reduction in the thickness of the centre member, the roots of one opposing surface of the centre member **128b** may be radially offset from the roots of the other opposing surface of the centre member **128b**.

Preferably, one of both of the torque couplings **210** comprises a centering mechanism that is coupled to the centre member and is configured to urge the center member away from the end members. The centering mechanism may comprise a ball bearing. For example, as shown in FIGS. **10a**, **10b**, the outer splined surface **123** of the stepped attachment bracket **122** may be configured with a plurality of wells **142**, each having a crimp **143** for retaining a respective ball bearing **144** therein, and the radially inner end of the centre member **128b** of the innermost torque coupling **210b** may comprise a recess **152b** that is configured for capturing a portion of the ball bearing **144** therein. As shown, the recess **152b** may comprise a V-shaped pocket.

Alternately, the centering mechanism may comprise a spring. For example, as shown in FIGS. **11a**, **11b**, the outer splined surface **123** of the stepped attachment bracket **122** may be configured with a spoon-shaped spring **153a**, and the radially inner end of the centre member **128b** of the innermost torque coupling **210b** may comprise a recess **152b** that is configured for capturing a portion of the spring **153a** therein. FIG. 12 depicts a variation in which the centering mechanism comprises a wave spring **153b**.

Preferably, the centre member comprises at least one oil passage that is configured to facilitate a cascading oil flow to the V-grooves of the associated end members. Therefore, as shown in FIG. 13, the centre member **128b** may comprise at least one oil passage **280** that extends radially through a plurality of the roots of the V-grooves **132b**, **134b** towards the radial inner end of the centre member **128b**. Preferably, the centre member **128b** comprises a plurality of the oil passages **280**, each extending through a respective number of the roots of the V-grooves **132b**, **134b** in accordance with the angular position of the respective oil passage **280**.

Preferably, one or both of the end members of one or both of the torque couplings **210** comprises at least one oil passage that is configured to provide a flow of oil to the V-grooves of the centre member even when the planar face of the end member abuts against a fixed transmission component. For instance, the oil passage may be provided in the left end member **124b** of the innermost torque coupling **210b**. As shown in FIG. 14, the oil passage may comprise a through-hole **154b** that extends axially from one of the roots of the V-grooves **136b** towards the planar face thereof, and a slot **155b** that is provided in the planar face and extends radially from the through-hole **154b** towards the radial inner end of the left end member **124b**. Preferably, the end

member **124b** is provided with a plurality of the oil passages, with the through-hole **154b** of each oil passage being disposed at varying radial positions around the end member **124b**.

5 Gear Ratio Transitions of Transmission Drive-Line Stage **200**

FIG. 15.1 depicts the transmission drive-line stage **200**, with the actuator **230a** inactive. In this mode, the wave spring **239** axially urges the left centre member **228a.1** towards the left end member **124b**. This axial movement of the left centre member **228a.1** urges the radially innermost V-grooved face of the left centre member **228a.1** against the associated surface of the centre member **128b**, thereby axially urging the centre member **128b** towards the left end member **124b** until the opposite surface of the centre member **128b** engages the associated V-grooved face of the left end member **124b**. At the same time, the ball bearing **144** (captured within the axial extension **122**) becomes displaced from the centre of the recess **152b** of the centre member **128b**. As a result, the V-grooves **132b**, **134b** of the centre member **128b** engage the V-grooves **136b** of the left end member **124b** and the V-grooves **136b** **238b** of the left centre members **228a.1**, thereby coupling the centre member **128b** to the members **124b**, **228a.1**.

At the same time, the finger spring **245** urges the right end member **226a** away from the right centre member **228a.2**, and the finger spring **278** urges the cylindrical case **203** (and hence the left end member **224a**) towards the annular gear **106**. Although the wave spring **239** urges the left centre member **228a.1** towards the left end member **124b**, the width of the centre member **128b** causes the left centre member **228a.1** to remain axially displaced from the left end member **224a**. As a result, the centre members **228a** are axially separated from the end members **224a**, **226a**, thereby disengaging the V-grooves **232a**, **234a** of the centre members **228a** from the V-grooves **236a**, **238a** of the end members **224a**, **226a**, and uncoupling the centre members **228a** from the end members **224a**, **226a**.

Since the members **124b**, **228a.1** are coupled to and rotate with the axial extension **218**, and the centre member **128b** is coupled to and rotates with the axial extension **122**, the input shaft **104** becomes coupled to the annular gear **106** via the innermost torque coupling **210b**, thereby causing the planetary gears **214** to rotate in unison with the annular gear **106** when the sun gear **112** rotates. As a result, in the mode depicted in FIG. 5.1, the torque of the input shaft **104** is transmitted to the output shaft **116** through the sun gear **112**, the planetary gears **214** and the cage **108**, thereby providing the transmission drive-line stage **200** with a 1:1 gear-ratio X^0 .

FIG. 15.2 depicts the transmission drive-line stage **200**, with the actuator **230a** active. In this mode, the actuator **230a** urges the right end member **226a** axially towards the right centre member **228a.2**. The actuator **230a** also urges the cylindrical case **203** axially away from the annular gear **106**, thereby pulling the left end member **224a** axially towards the left centre member **228a.1**. At the same time, the left centre member **228a.1** is urged axially towards the right centre member **228a.2**, thereby compressing the wave spring **239** between the centre members **228a**.

This axial movement of the end members **224a**, **226a** simultaneously urges the V-grooved face of the left end member **224a** against the associated surface of the left centre member **228a.1**, and the V-grooved face of the right end member **226a** against the associated surface of the right centre member **228a.2**, until the left centre member **228a.1** engages the associated V-grooved face of the left end

member **224a** and the right centre member **228a.2** engages the associated V-grooved face of the right end member **226a**. As a result, the V-grooves **232a**, **234a** of the centre members **228a** engage the V-grooves **236a**, **238a** of the end members **224a**, **226a**, thereby coupling the centre members **228a** to the end members **224a**, **226a**.

At the same time as the left centre member **228a.1** moves towards the right centre member **228a.2**, the left centre member **228a.1** is urged axially away from the centre member **128b**, thereby allowing the ball bearing **144** (captured within the axial extension **122**) to return to the centre of the recess **152b** of the centre member **128b**. The ball bearing **144** provides a centering action that maintains the centre member **128b** away from the left end member **124b** and the left centre member **228a.1**, thereby disengaging the V-grooves **132b**, **134b** of the centre member **128b** from the V-grooves **136b**, **238b** of the members **124b**, **228a.1**, and uncoupling the centre member **128b** from the members **124b**, **228a.1**.

Since the end members **224a**, **226a** are fixed to the transmission housing **102** via the cylindrical case **203**, and the centre members **228a** are coupled to and rotate with the axial extension **218**, the annular gear **106** becomes grounded to the transmission housing **102** via the outermost torque coupling **210a**, thereby causing the planetary gears **214** to rotate relative to the annular gear **106** when the sun gear **112** rotates. As a result, in the mode depicted in FIG. 5.2, the torque of the input shaft **104** is transmitted to the output shaft **116** through the sun gear **112**, the planetary gears **214**, the annular gear **106** and the cage **108**, thereby providing the transmission drive-line stage **200** with a gear-ratio X^1 that is determined by the relative sizes of the sun gear **112**, the planetary gears **214** and the annular gear **106**.

As will be apparent, each torque coupling **210a**, **210b** provides a respective gear ratio between the torque input member and the torque output member of the transmission drive-line stage **200**. However, since the activations and deactivations of the torque couplings **210** are coordinated internally, the transition between the gear ratios may be effected without separate external controls for each torque coupling **210a**, **210b**. Moreover, since the drive-line stage **200** only includes a single actuator **130a**, and the cylindrical case **203** does not rotate relative to the transmission housing **102**, the transition between the gear ratios is effected without the dynamic high pressure seals of the transmission drive-line stage **100**, but is instead effected using static seals.

The actuator **230a** and the springs **239**, **245**, **278** are configured to limit drive-line torque discontinuity during the transition between the gear ratios. As a result, the actuator **230a** couples the end members **224a**, **226a** and the centre members **228a** of the outermost torque coupling **210a** in synchronism with the uncoupling of the members **124a**, **228a.1** and the centre member **128b** of the innermost torque coupling **210b** (and vice versa), such that an increase in torque between the end members and the centre member in one of the torque couplings **210a**, **210b** is accompanied by a corresponding decrease in torque between the end members and the centre member in the other torque coupling **210a**, **210b**.

Variations in Torque Input Member of Transmission Drive-Line Stage **200**

In contrast to the transmission drive-line stage **100**, the transmission drive-line stage **200** does not provide a neutral/vehicle launch capability due to the synchronisation between the torque couplings **210a**, **210b**. FIGS. **16a**, **16b** and **16c** depict three variations of the torque input member which can provide the transmission drive-line stage **200** with a neutral/

vehicle launch capability. The variations depicted in FIGS. **16a** and **16b** selectively couple the sun gear to the input shaft **104** via a cone coupling, whereas the variation depicted in FIG. **16c** selectively couples the sun gear to the input shaft **104** via a synchromesh gear set.

The torque input member depicted in FIG. **16a** comprises the input shaft **104**, a sun gear **112b**, a conical actuator **300**, and a full-complement multi-directional cone coupling, as previously described by the instant inventor in U.S. Pat. No. 6,409,001. The sun gear **112b** is substantially identical to the sun gear **112** previously described, except that it is not integral with the input shaft **104**. Instead, the sun gear **112b** is selectively coupled to the input shaft by the cone coupling, as will be described below.

The input shaft **104** includes a plurality of elongate slots. The conical actuator **300** includes an inner slotted surface, and an outer conical friction surface. The inner slotted surface and the elongate slots together define a plurality of channels for receiving ball bearings **310** therein. The conical actuator **300** is axially movable along the input shaft **104** via the ball bearings **310**. However, the ball bearings **310** prevent the conical actuator **300** from rotating relative to the input shaft **104**.

The cone coupling is disposed within the stepped attachment bracket **122**, and comprises an inner coupling member **302**, an outer coupling member **304**, a tubular slipper **306**, and a plurality of roller bearings. The inner coupling member **302** has a inner conical friction surface, and an outer cylindrical friction surface. The inner conical friction surface is configured for engagement with the outer conical friction surface of the conical actuator **300**.

The slipper **306** has an inner friction surface and an outer bearing surface. The outer coupling member **304** has an inner bearing surface and an outer friction surface. The outer friction surface of the outer coupling member **304** is frictionally coupled to the stepped attachment bracket **122**. The inner and outer bearing surfaces together define a plurality of channels for receiving the roller bearings therein. The channels and roller bearings are configured to couple the inner and outer coupling members **302**, **304** together as the slipper **306** and outer coupling member **304** rotate relative to each other.

When the conical actuator **300** is withdrawn from the cone coupling, the input shaft **104** is free to rotate relative to the stepped attachment bracket **122** and the sun gear **112a**, thereby providing the transmission drive-line stage **200** with a neutral gear. However, as the conical actuator **300** is urged towards the stepped attachment bracket **122** via a suitable actuator **312**, the outer conical friction surface of the conical actuator **308** frictionally engages the inner conical friction surface of the inner coupling member **302**. As a result, the conical actuator **300** progressively couples the input shaft **104** to the stepped attachment bracket **122** and the sun gear **112a** via the cone coupling, thereby transferring input torque from the input shaft **104** to the stepped attachment bracket **122** and the sun gear **112a**.

With the input member depicted in FIG. **16a**, the sun gear **112a**, planetary gears **114** and annular gear **106** are not subject to input rotation until after cone closure. Therefore, vehicle launch in either ratio-state X^1 or X^0 is not possible without cone closure, effectively making the cone coupling rather than the torque couplings **210a**, **210b** the launching mechanism.

The torque input member depicted in FIG. **16b** is substantially identical to the torque input member depicted in FIG. **16a** except that once again the sun gear **112** is integral with the input shaft **104**. However, the stepped attachment

bracket **122a** is not spline-attached to the sun gear **112**, but is instead selectively coupled to the input shaft **104** via the cone coupling. With the input member depicted in FIG. **16b**, input rotation of the sun gear **112a** is not subject to cone closure. Since vehicle launch in ratio-state X^1 is possible without cone closure (upon activation of the outermost torque coupling **210a**); cone closure is only required to effect ratio-state X^0 .

The torque input member depicted in FIG. **16c** is substantially identical to the torque input member depicted in FIG. **16b** except that the stepped attachment bracket **122a** is selectively coupled to the input shaft **104** via a synchromesh gear set **314**. As above, the ball bearings **310** allow the synchromesh gear set **314** to move axially along the input shaft, but also prevent the synchromesh gear set **314** from rotating relative to the input shaft **104**.

With the input member depicted in FIG. **16c**, input rotation of the sun gear **112a** is not subject to synchromesh gear set engagement. Therefore, vehicle launch in ratio-state X^1 is possible without synchromesh gear set engagement, and is only required to effect ratio-state X^0 .

Relative Performance of Transmission Drive-Line Stages

The inventor has determined that replacing the conventional multi-disc/plate clutch pack of a conventional transmission drive-line stage with the torque couplings **110** of the transmission drive-line stage **100** decreases parasitic/no load open clutch losses to between 66% to 75%. Further, the transmission drive-line stage **100** does not require an external co-ordinating mechanism to effect an acceptable transition between ratio-state X^0 and ratio-state X^1 while the vehicle is motion.

The inventor has determined that replacing the torque couplings **110** of the transmission drive-line stage **100** with the torque couplings **210** of the transmission drive-line stage **200** (but without the optional configurations depicted in FIG. **9**, **10a**, **10b**, **11a**, **11b**, **12**, **13** or **14**) realizes an additional parasitic/no load loss savings of between 700 and 1600 watts depending on a speed of rotation. Further, the transmission drive-line stage **200** does not require dynamic high pressure oil seals.

Modifying the transmission drive-line stage **100**, **200** by replacing the planetary gear set **104** with a coplanar reverted gear set, as previously described by the instant inventor in U.S. Pat. No. 6,126,566, further decreases parasitic/no load losses. Use of the configuration depicted in FIGS. **9**, **10a**, **12**, **13** and **14** decreases parasite/no load losses even further.

The inventor conducted parasitic/no-load drag tests of the torque coupling **210b** in which the sun gear of the transmission drive-line stage was disabled, and the annular gear was coupled directly to the output cage of the planetary gear set. FIG. **17b** depicts the open-coupling parasitic/no-load drag test results for a transmission drive-line stage having the torque coupling **210b** and the spring centering mechanism of FIG. **12**. For comparison purposes, FIG. **17a** depicts open-coupling parasitic/no-load drag test results for a transmission drive-line stage having a multi-disc/plate coupling. In each figure, the abscissas represents drag torque (lb-in), and the ordinate represents rotational speed (rpm).

As shown, variance was very pronounced using the multi-disc/plate coupling, as shown in FIG. **17a**. In contrast, speed had little effect on the relatively steady drag torque of the torque couplings **210b**, as shown in FIG. **17b**. Moreover, these tests demonstrate that open drag favours torque coupling **210b** over a multi-disc/plate coupling of equivalent capacity, by lowering drag losses by 66% and 75% when rotation speed is between 500 and 2000 rpm, with a lesser improvement in performance at higher speeds.

FIG. **17c** compares the oil squish and no-load drag test results for a transmission drive-line stage having a planetary gear set against a transmission drive-line stage having a coplanar reverted gear set. Graph a) depicts the oil squish parasitic/no-load drag test results for a transmission drive-line stage having a planetary gear set but with the clutch pack removed. Graph b) depicts the oil squish parasitic/no-load drag test results for a transmission drive-line stage having a coplanar reverted gear set but with the clutch pack removed. Graph c) depicts the parasitic drag for the oil seals of the transmission drive-line stages of FIG. **17a**, **17b**, but with the couplings closed. Again, the abscissas represents drag torque (lb-in), and the ordinate represents rotational speed (rpm).

These test results suggest that use of the transmission drive-line stage **100**, **200**, but configured with a series of coplanar reverted gear sets (instead of planetary gear sets) to effect an eight or sixteen-speed transmission drive-line, would reduce parasitic/no load losses by 12,000-15,000 watts, or the equivalent of 15-20 hp, when equated to an engine speed of 2000 rpm, and would provide a road efficiency of over 90% when equated to the power needed for highway driving.

I claim:

1. A coupling comprising:

at least two inter-connected torque couplings, each comprising:

a pair of clutch end members, each said end member including a set of concentric V-grooves disposed on a respective face thereof;

a clutch centre member disposed between the respective clutch end members, the centre member being axially movable between the respective end members and including a pair of opposing surfaces, one of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of one of the respective end members, another of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of another of the respective end members; and

an actuator coupled to one of the end members and being configured to simultaneously couple the end members to the centre member by engaging the V-grooves of both of the respective end members with the V-grooves of the centre member,

wherein the centre member of one of the torque couplings comprises one of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling, another of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling and one of the end members of another of the torque couplings, and

wherein the centre member of the another torque coupling has a radially outer end and a radially inner end, each said V-groove includes a root disposed between peaks, and the opposing surfaces are disposed at an acute angle relative to each other such that a distance between one of the peaks of the one opposing surface and a closest one of the peaks of the another opposing surface is less at one of the radial ends than at another of the radial ends.

2. The coupling according to claim 1, wherein the roots of the one clutch plate are radially offset from the roots of the another clutch plate.

3. The coupling according to claim 1, wherein each said V-groove provided on the centre member of at least one of the torque couplings comprises a root disposed between adjacent peaks, and the centre member of the at least one

21

torque coupling has a radially outer end and a radially inner end and comprises at least one oil passage extending radially through a plurality of the roots thereof towards the inner end thereof.

4. The coupling according to claim 3, wherein the centre member of the at least one torque coupling comprises a plurality of the oil passages each extending through a respective number of the roots thereof in accordance with an angular position of the oil passage.

5. A coupling comprising:
at least two inter-connected torque couplings, each comprising:

a pair of clutch end members, each said end member including a set of concentric V-grooves disposed on a respective face thereof;

a clutch centre member disposed between the respective clutch end members, the centre member being axially movable between the respective end members and including a pair of opposing surfaces, one of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of one of the respective end members, another of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of another of the respective end members; and

an actuator coupled to one of the end members and being configured to simultaneously couple the end members to the centre member by engaging the V-grooves of both of the respective end members with the V-grooves of the centre member,

wherein the centre member of one of the torque couplings comprises one of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling, another of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling and one of the end members of another of the torque couplings,

wherein the another torque coupling comprises a centering mechanism coupled to the centre member thereof and configured to urge the center member thereof away from the respective end members, and

wherein the centering mechanism comprises one of a ball and a spring coupled to a rotational shaft, the centre member of the another torque coupling has a radially outer end and a radially inner end, and the radially inner end of the centre member of the another torque coupling is configured for mounting to the rotational shaft and comprises a recess configured for capturing the centering mechanism therein.

6. The coupling according to claim 5, wherein the recess comprises a V-shaped pocket.

7. A coupling comprising:
at least two inter-connected torque couplings, each comprising:

a pair of clutch end members, each said end member including a set of concentric V-grooves disposed on a respective face thereof;

a clutch centre member disposed between the respective clutch end members, the centre member being axially movable between the respective end members and including a pair of opposing surfaces, one of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of one of the respective end members, another of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of another of the respective end members; and

22

an actuator coupled to one of the end members and being configured to simultaneously couple the end members to the centre member by engaging the V-grooves of both of the respective end members with the V-grooves of the centre member,

wherein the centre member of one of the torque couplings comprises one of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling, another of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling and one of the end members of another of the torque couplings, and

wherein the centre member of at least one of the torque couplings comprises at least one oil passage configured to facilitate a cascading oil flow to the V-grooves of the respective end members.

8. A coupling comprising:
at least two inter-connected torque couplings, each comprising:

a pair of clutch end members, each said end member including a set of concentric V-grooves disposed on a respective face thereof;

a clutch centre member disposed between the respective clutch end members, the centre member being axially movable between the respective end members and including a pair of opposing surfaces, one of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of one of the respective end members, another of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of another of the respective end members; and

an actuator coupled to one of the end members and being configured to simultaneously couple the end members to the centre member by engaging the V-grooves of both of the respective end members with the V-grooves of the centre member,

wherein the centre member of one of the torque couplings comprises one of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling, another of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling and one of the end members of another of the torque couplings, and

wherein one of the end members of at least one of the torque couplings comprises at least one oil passage configured to provide a flow of oil to the associated V-grooves of the centre member thereof.

9. A coupling comprising:
at least two inter-connected torque couplings, each comprising:

a pair of clutch end members, each said end member including a set of concentric V-grooves disposed on a respective face thereof;

a clutch centre member disposed between the respective clutch end members, the centre member being axially movable between the respective end members and including a pair of opposing surfaces, one of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of one of the respective end members, another of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of another of the respective end members; and

an actuator coupled to one of the end members and being configured to simultaneously couple the end members to the centre member by engaging the V-grooves of both of the respective end members with the V-grooves of the centre member,

wherein the centre member of one of the torque couplings comprises one of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling, another of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling and one of the end members of another of the torque couplings, and

wherein each said V-groove provided on at least one of the end members of at least one of the torque couplings comprises a root disposed between adjacent peaks, and the at least one end member of the at least one torque coupling has a radially outer end and a radially inner end and comprises at least one oil passage, each said oil passage comprising a through-hole extending axially from one of the roots thereof towards an opposite face of the at least one end member, and a slot provided in the opposite face thereof and extending radially from the through-hole towards the inner end thereof.

10. The coupling according to claim 9, wherein the one end member comprises a plurality of the oil passages disposed at varying radial positions around the one end member.

11. A transmission drive-line stage comprising:

a torque input member;

a torque reactive member;

a torque output member; and

a pair of torque couplings configured to transfer torque between the torque input member and the torque output member, each said torque coupling comprising:

a pair of clutch end members, each said end member including a set of concentric V-grooves disposed on a respective face thereof;

a clutch centre member disposed between the respective clutch end members, the centre member being axially movable between the respective end members and including a pair of opposing surfaces, one of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of one of the respective end members, another of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of another of the respective end members; and

an actuator coupled to one of the end members and being configured to simultaneously couple the end members to the centre member by engaging the V-grooves of both of the respective end members with the V-grooves of the centre member,

wherein the centre member of one of the torque couplings is coupled to the torque reactive member, one of the end members of another of the torque couplings is coupled to the torque reactive member, and the centre member of the another torque coupling is coupled to the torque input member, and

wherein the centre member of the one torque coupling comprises one of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling, another of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling and one of the end members of the another torque coupling.

12. The transmission drive-line stage according to claim 11, wherein the actuator of the one torque coupling is operable independently of the actuator of the another torque coupling.

13. The transmission drive-line stage according to claim 11, wherein the actuator of the another torque coupling is configured to uncouple the end members thereof from the centre member thereof in synchronism with activation of the actuator of the one torque coupling, such that an increase in torque between the end members and the centre member in

the one torque coupling is accompanied by a corresponding decrease in torque between the end members and the centre member in the another torque coupling.

14. The transmission drive-line stage according to claim 11, wherein the centre member of the another torque coupling has a radially outer end and a radially inner end, each said V-groove includes a root disposed between peaks, and the opposing surfaces are disposed at an acute angle relative to each other such that a distance between one of the peaks of the one opposing surface and a closest one of the peaks of the another opposing surface is less at one of the radial ends than at another of the radial ends.

15. The transmission drive-line stage according to claim 14, wherein the roots of the one clutch plate are radially offset from the roots of the another clutch plate.

16. The transmission drive-line stage according to claim 11, wherein the another torque coupling comprises a centering mechanism coupled to the centre member thereof and configured to urge the center member thereof away from the respective end members.

17. The transmission drive-line stage according to claim 16, wherein the centering mechanism comprises one of a ball and a spring coupled to the torque input member, the centre member of the another torque coupling has a radially outer end and a radially inner end, and the radially inner end of the centre member of the another torque coupling comprises a recess configured for capturing the centering mechanism therein.

18. The transmission drive-line stage according to claim 11, wherein the centre member of the another torque coupling is selectively coupled to the torque input member via one of a cone coupling and a synchromesh gear set.

19. The transmission drive-line stage according to claim 11, wherein the torque input member comprises a torque input shaft and a sun gear provided on the torque input shaft, the torque reactive member comprises an annular gear, and the torque output member comprises a coplanar reverted gear loop coupled to the annular gear and the sun gear.

20. The transmission drive-line stage according to claim 11, wherein the torque reactive member comprises at least one axially-extending finger, and the clutch plates are mounted on the at least one finger and rotate with the torque reactive member, the one clutch plate being axially movable along the at least one finger, the another clutch plate being fixed to the at least one finger.

21. The transmission drive-line stage according to claim 20, wherein the end plates of the another torque coupling rotate with the torque reactive member and are axially movable along the at least one finger.

22. The transmission drive-line stage according to claim 11, wherein the centre member of the one torque coupling comprises a pair of clutch plates, one of the clutch plates comprises the one opposing surface of the one torque coupling, and another of the clutch plates comprises the another of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling and the one end member of the another torque coupling.

23. The transmission drive-line stage according to claim 22, wherein the one clutch plate is axially movable with respect to the another clutch plate, and the actuator of the another torque coupling comprises a biasing spring urging the end members thereof and the centre member thereof together and urging the clutch plates apart, the biasing spring and the actuator of the one torque coupling being configured to limit drive-line torque discontinuity during transition between the gear ratios.

24. The transmission drive-line stage according to claim 23, wherein the biasing spring is disposed between the

25

clutch plates, the another of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling and the one end member of the another torque coupling are disposed on a common side of the another clutch plate, and the another of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling is disposed radially outwards from the one end member of the another torque coupling.

25. A coupling comprising:

at least two inter-connected torque couplings, each comprising:

a pair of clutch end members, each said end member including a set of concentric V-grooves disposed on a respective face thereof;

a clutch centre member disposed between the respective clutch end members, the centre member being axially movable between the respective end members and including a pair of opposing surfaces, one of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of one of the respective end members, another of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of another of the respective end members; and

an actuator coupled to one of the end members and being configured to simultaneously couple the end members to the centre member by engaging the V-grooves of both of the respective end members with the V-grooves of the centre member,

wherein the centre member of one of the torque couplings comprises one of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling, another of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling and one of the end members of another of the torque couplings, and

wherein the actuator of the one torque coupling is operable independently of the actuator of the another torque coupling.

26. A coupling comprising:

at least two inter-connected torque couplings, each comprising:

a pair of clutch end members, each said end member including a set of concentric V-grooves disposed on a respective face thereof;

a clutch centre member disposed between the respective clutch end members, the centre member being axially movable between the respective end members and including a pair of opposing surfaces, one of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of one of the respective end members, another of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of another of the respective end members; and

an actuator coupled to one of the end members and being configured to simultaneously couple the end members to the centre member by engaging the V-grooves of both of the respective end members with the V-grooves of the centre member,

26

wherein the centre member of one of the torque couplings comprises one of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling, another of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling and one of the end members of another of the torque couplings, and

wherein the actuator of the another torque coupling is configured to uncouple the end members thereof from the centre member thereof in synchronism with activation of the actuator of the one torque coupling.

27. A coupling comprising:

at least two inter-connected torque couplings, each comprising:

a pair of clutch end members, each said end member including a set of concentric V-grooves disposed on a respective face thereof;

a clutch centre member disposed between the respective clutch end members, the centre member being axially movable between the respective end members and including a pair of opposing surfaces, one of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of one of the respective end members, another of the opposing surfaces including a plurality of concentric V-grooves configured to mesh with the set of V-grooves of another of the respective end members; and

an actuator coupled to one of the end members and being configured to simultaneously couple the end members to the centre member by engaging the V-grooves of both of the respective end members with the V-grooves of the centre member,

wherein the centre member of one of the torque couplings comprises one of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling, another of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling and one of the end members of another of the torque couplings, and

wherein the centre member of the one torque coupling comprises a pair of clutch plates, one of the clutch plates comprises the one opposing surface of the one torque coupling, and another of the clutch plates comprises the another of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling and the one end member of the another torque coupling.

28. The coupling according to claim 27, wherein the one clutch plate is axially movable with respect to the another clutch plate, and the actuator of the another torque coupling comprises a biasing spring urging the end members thereof and the centre member thereof together and urging the clutch plates apart.

29. The coupling according to claim 28, wherein the biasing spring is disposed between the clutch plates, the another of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling and the one end member of the another torque coupling are disposed on a common side of the another clutch plate, and the another of the opposing surfaces of the one torque coupling is disposed radially outwards from the one end member of the another torque coupling.

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